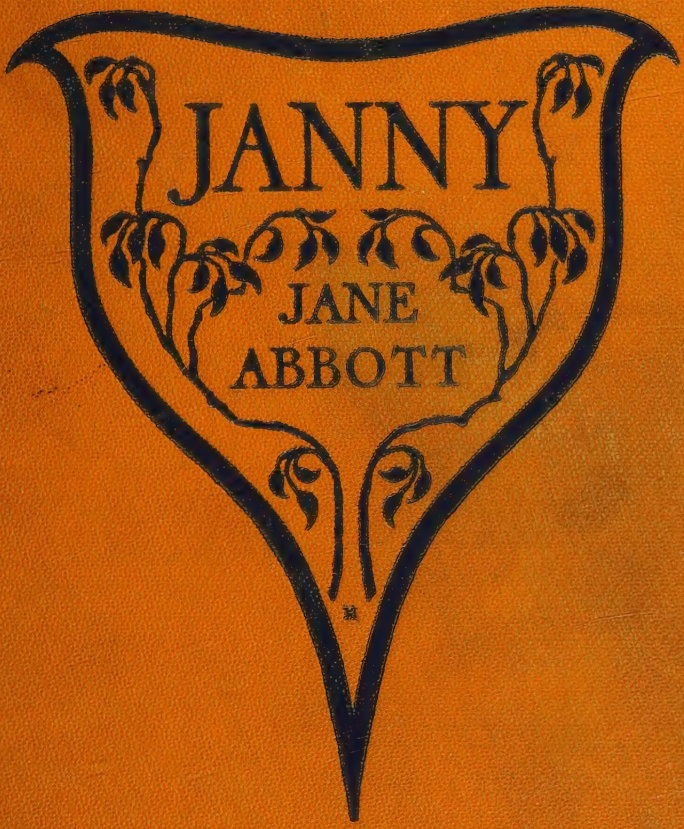
JANNY
JANE
ABBOTT

Christmas 1941

JANNY

BY

JANE ABBOTT

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"Juliet is Twenty," "Minglestreams," etc.

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JANNY

CHAPTER I

JANNY

THE wind was whining down the chimney. Janice Bartley, listening to it, thought: "It sounds like a witch singing with a cold in her head." She mimicked it, pulling her young lips tight against her teeth.

Outside the leaves were blowing across the ground with a great rattle and to-do.

She went to the window and watched them, watched the way the wind heaped them in little piles only to scatter them ruthlessly the next instant. Most of the leaves were dry and yellow, though here and there among them Janny caught a flash of scarlet. The sparse coarse grass of the clearing was dry and brown and the ground showed dull and hard through it.

Toby, the bob-tailed cat, was chasing the leaves, chasing them in wild circles, tumbling idiotically among them. Janny laughed at him. "I wish I was a cat," she said aloud. She opened the window and leaned out that she might feel the whip of the wind on her face. It was strong and clean and smelled of the forest. She drew a long deep breath. "I wish I was the wind. I wish I was the wind and could blow and blow—I'd blow so *hard*——" She thrust her shoulders out of the little square of window that she might see as far as

the turn of the road where a hemlock towered among the maples and birches. The maples and birches were bending to the wind but the hemlock did not bend one little bit. Janny exulted. "I wish I was a big tree."

A sharp crackling of wood behind her brought her abruptly from her musings. Shutting the window, she ran to the stove, where a wood fire was burning. She took the cover from a stewpan and peeped into it. Then she replaced it with a long breath.

"It's a good thing for you, Janny Bartley, that the beets didn't burn when you were wishing your silly nonsense. And now you'd better be about your work or dinner won't be ready for Doctor John."

She moved briskly about her tasks. As she did so she held her head high. She considered she had reason to do so. Mother Faire had gone down to Stafford to visit for four whole days and had left her to keep house and she was doing it well. Doctor John had told her she was a good little housekeeper. And that was not the only reason she was proud. This morning early Mrs. Angus and Mrs. Ostrander had come in, to see "how she was getting on," they'd said. And they'd seen that she was getting on very well, indeed. The cabin looked as trim as Mother Faire would have had it. Janny had caught Mrs. Ostrander's thin nostrils sniffing to detect the odor of burned food. And she had sniffed in vain. Recalling that now, Janny laughed exultingly. Probably they'd have enjoyed their visit more if they had found things in a mess, unwashed dishes on the table, Doctor John's books about, the beds

tumbled. But they hadn't! Lucky, though, that they had not caught her at her dreaming. Then Mrs. Angus would not have said: "Mary Faire's certainly bringing you up like you was her own daughter."

She sat on a stool to peel the potatoes. The wind still whistled down the chimney, but now she thought it sounded like a little gnome singing—a little gnome hiding among the bricks. It sounded very cheerful. She felt very cheerful and good and contented.

She looked over the tidy room and thought: "How nice it is here. It's nicer than any other home in Painted Post."

It was not difficult for Janny to know this because there were not so many homes in this remote corner of the Canadian woods north of Lake Superior but that she was familiar with them all, from the Angus's living room and kitchen behind the pretentious false front of the Grand Hotel to the shack of Jaques Le Boque, where the trail started around Shingle Falls. No other cabin in Painted Post had bookshelves such as Doctor John had built wherever there was space between windows and doors; no other cabin had such neat cupboards with little glass knobs, knobs which Mother Faire had brought with her from her old home in Massachusetts; no other cabin was so gaily painted or boasted flower boxes and trim little rugs.

Janny knew, too, that Doctor John was different from the other men in Painted Post. For one thing, he had not come to this country to find a silver mine. He was not a trader or a trapper or a government agent

or a remittance man, like Peter Sidney. Once Mother Faire had told her that Doctor John always had wanted to live in a place where he'd have "room" to think. Janny had not understood that exactly but she thought he must have found a great deal of room in Painted Post. And Doctor John had decided that, as long as he was here in Painted Post and there wasn't any one else who wanted to teach any one, he might as well do what teaching was needed. He'd put up a mail-order cabin next to the Grand Hotel, where, when the weather was not too cold nor too hot, he held classes, at hours to suit the convenience of his pupils. There he occasionally held religious service and there he administered medicine and advice to those who came to him from miles around, white men, Indians, half-breeds. Certainly Janny knew there was no one on the Shingle River—if in the whole world—like Doctor John! And certainly no one of the women in Painted Post was like Mother Faire. Mother Faire used tablecloths and napkins and hung white muslin curtains at her windows and planted flowers every spring and curled her hair and talked in a soft voice. Mother Faire read the books on the shelves, too; Janny did not think any of the other women in Painted Post ever read anything.

Whenever Janny thought how different Doctor John and Mother Faire were from any one else she felt a little rush of thankfulness that she was living with them instead of with Mrs. Angus at the Grand Hotel or with Mrs. Ostrander or with Mrs. MacGregor. An hour ago, as she watched Mrs. Angus's and Mrs.

Ostrander's departing backs, she had thought: "I'm glad, glad, *glad* I'm not living with either of you!" She actually had shuddered, thinking how this very minute she might be getting dinner in the sloppy kitchen of the Grand. She knew she had come close to such a fate.

She could remember almost every detail of that evening, six years before, when a handful of men and women gathered in the cabin at the edge of the settlement where she and her father had lived. They had gathered to decide "what to do with the Bartley kid." They had sat around a table in the circle of light from the one lamp. The cabin had looked pitifully empty, as if, when they had carried her father from it they had taken all that was warm and alive. Janny herself had crouched in a corner as removed from those others as the limited space allowed. They had said unkind sounding things about her father. Mrs. Angus had called him "queer as all get out." One of the men had said he was "close-mouthed." Cass Ostrander had said: "It was Bartley's own business keeping to himself like he had but it sure made a pretty mess now for the young one." The criticism of her father had roused a furious anger in her child's heart, the greater because her father could not be there to defend himself. They had speculated on her "relations." "If her pa had any folks close enough to claim her, Joe Primrose was the only one knew about them." And he'd gone off and no one had an idea when he was likely to come back. Mrs. Angus had said she'd take the child, that she

could use a girl; she had boys enough but they weren't any help in the kitchen. Mrs. MacGregor had reminded the others that, inasmuch as her husband had been a government agent before he settled in Painted Post, her home was as near a government institution as the community could boast and therefore the poor orphaned young one should come to them. And while every fibre of the "poor orphaned young one" was shrinking from such a fate Mrs. Ostrander had declared tartly that, her husband representing the Hudson Bay Trading Post, she guessed her home was as much of an institution as any one needed and *she* ought to take the girl, though goodness knew she wasn't looking for another mouth to feed. Janny had been too young, too terrified, then, to sense any kindliness under the sharp words; she saw only the thin line of Mrs. MacGregor's lips, the way Mrs. Ostrander's little eyes moved around and around the cabin. But just when her world seemed turning to chaos Mother Faire had spoken in her quiet voice. "We'd love to have a little girl in our home, wouldn't we, John? I wish she would come to us until we find some of her relations." Mother Faire had been the only one who suggested loving her. She had been the only one who offered Janny any choice in the matter. Janny had run straight to her, had clung to her with straining arms. And Mrs. Faire had held her close. The others had gone away after a little. Doctor John and Mother Faire had helped her pack her few possessions in an old bag, and between them she had

walked out of the cabin, through the woods, to their home.

That had been six years ago. Joe Primrose had not come back. No relations had appeared to claim her. She had lived on with Doctor John and Mother Faire. With them she had grown to know a security that was warm like the feel of Mother Faire's arms when they shut her away from the others on that unforgettable night. Mother Faire and Doctor John loved her and she loved them, with a fervor mixed with admiration and gratitude. Quite humbly and with conscious effort she had striven to do everything she did a little better than the dozen or so other young people in Painted Post could do them, to excel in lessons, in household tasks, in managing a canoe or a dog team, to find her way by the stars or bind an injured ankle, simply because such excellence made her more worthy of sharing Doctor John's and Mother Faire's home.

She was fifteen now, and when one is fifteen in Painted Post one is almost grown-up. This very morning she had tipped the little mirror in her room that she might see her long-legged self in it and she had looked very tall. In a little while she'd "do up" the dusky-brown hair which now she wore in one long tight pigtail. In a little while she could take care of Doctor John's house and Mother Faire could go visiting whenever she wanted to or sit all day long and read. It would be fun being grown-up. Perhaps Doctor John would let her help teach, too.

She was peeling potatoes as thin as ever she could

to avoid the sin of waste. She wished Mrs. Angus could see how nice and thin the peelings were. Suddenly a little frown wrinkled her brow. Her visitors had said things she did not think they would have said if Mother Faire had been at home. Mrs. Ostrander had wondered aloud what on earth a body wanted with all those books and she had asked Janny if it was true, what Cass had told, that there were even some poetry books among them. Mrs. Ostrander said she thought jingles were all right for children, but for grown folks! And Mrs. Angus had asked her if she had heard anything from that Joe Primrose. "Funny he hasn't come back, seeing he was so thick with your pa. And you've never heard from any of your pa's relations, either?" She would not have asked her that if Mother Faire had been there!

Janny did not mind what they said about the books; she was proud of the books and she loved the thin little volumes of poetry best of all. But she wished Mrs. Angus had not spoken as she had about Joe Primrose. Her voice had sounded so mean when she said "that" Joe Primrose. Janny had loved Joe. She loved him still. Rough, clumsy man of the woods that he was, he had been gentle with her. He had been the only playmate she had known. He had told her stories—not of Red Riding Hood or Jack and the Bean Stalk or of King Arthur, but crude stories of the frontier, given magic in his telling. Joe had taught her that there wasn't anything in the world of which she need be afraid. Many a time Joe had sung her to sleep,

cradling her in his great arms, or while he carried her on his shoulder, swinging along tree-shadowed trails. He had taught her songs. She remembered them now. She could not understand why he did not come back. But she would not let Mrs. Angus know that she thought it queer, too. Doctor John said maybe he had been killed up in the North country, but she did not think so. She *would* not think so. Joe must come back sometime.

These years with Doctor John and Mother Faire, their normal, happy, zestful activities, their contacts and common interests with neighbors, made those other years of her childhood seem to Janny to belong to some other little girl than she had been. As time went on she remembered less and less of them. They existed in her memory more as a confused procession of places. She had lived always in hotels, sometimes big hotels where there were women in lovely clothes and waiters with gleaming shirt-fronts, and music and palms; sometimes small hotels like the Grand, where by day the men gathered on the stoop and talked loudly and in back rooms by night. Sometimes she had been left with strange " nurses " of whom she had been horribly afraid and with whom she had been good simply because her father had implored her to be so; most times she was with her father and Joe Primrose. There had been in that childhood so many train rides, and rides over narrow trails through deep forests, that she could not remember any one of them singly. Her father she remembered well because she clung to that memory as

all she had of him. He had had thick red hair. She had liked to pull it to make him shake it until it tumbled about his head. He had been tall. When she hugged his knees, his blue eyes and his white teeth and his laughter had seemed very far away from her until he lifted her to kiss her under her chin. When he laughed he threw back his head and the cords of his neck showed white through the tan. He hid things deep in his pockets for her to find. He always tucked the blankets warm about her at night. Janny knew that he was nicer than any other father who ever had lived. She did not think he was " queer " or " close-mouthed," as those others had said.

The fear of " relations " had never stalked very close to her. Once Doctor John had questioned her gently as to whether she knew of any. " Did your father ever speak of any one? Did he ever get any letters? " She could not remember that he had. But when he was sick, that night before— She had told Doctor John about that. Her father had called to her. She had gone to his bed, shivering in her nightdress. He had bade her sit on the edge of the cot and had managed to put his arm around her so that she would feel warmer. He had told her that he was going away—going to join her mother. He had made a queer sound like laughing when he said it. But when she asked him if she could go, too, he had not laughed. He'd explained that this time she must stay behind but that she mustn't be afraid—some one would look after her, Doctor Faire would see to that, until old Joe came down. Then he

had said: "Maybe Nick will turn up." He had told her to hunt out a leather wallet among the things in a chest which he kept locked. She had found the key and the wallet in the chest and had taken it to her father. He had closed her fingers over it. "There's a bit of paper in there that may be worth something and may not. It's all I've got to leave you, baby. And you're not to let any one see it until Joe tells you to. Will you remember?" He had made her repeat his instructions after him until she knew them by heart. She had told Doctor John of this but she had not shown him the paper and he had not urged her to do so. She had peeped at it herself more than once, fingered it and the wallet tenderly, tearfully, because they had belonged to her father, but she did not think the paper could be worth anything to any one else. It was only a dirty scrap of paper, with some queer drawings on it and some words that did not mean anything: "Crooked pine tree—split rock—waterfall—Happy Day."

But there was the Nick of whom her father had spoken. Wrinkling her face in puzzlement, she had asked Doctor John: "Could that Nick be a relation?" After a little hesitation Doctor John had answered: "Well, he isn't much of a one to hang on to, child, is he?" Thereupon, reassured, she had dismissed any fear of relations. She dismissed it now, after Mrs. Angus's questioning, and thought only that Mrs. Angus had had nerve to question her.

She put the potatoes over. She set the table then, singing as she did so, singing one of Joe's old songs.

The clock striking reminded her of the hour. In ten minutes or so Doctor John would come. She ran to the window to see if she could see him coming, his familiar figure bent forward a little, his arm clutching a book against his side.

Toby was still chasing the leaves. The maples and birches were still tossing against the blue sky. A figure turned around the bend in the road where the big hemlock stood. But it was not Doctor John. It was a stranger.

Suddenly apprehensive, Janny watched the stranger approach. He must be coming here—after Doctor John. But why? Every one in Painted Post knew where to find Doctor John; no one would send the stranger *here*. This man was not like the traders and prospectors who came to the village. He was picking his way gingerly over the rough road, now and then pausing with obvious distaste before choosing a foothold. He was a tenderfoot.

All at once something in the stranger's tallness made Janny think of her father. Her alarm deepened. She left the window and went back to the stove and stood there, straight, waiting.

When finally the stranger knocked on the door she walked slowly to it and opened it. The man, looking up from his effort to remove some of the mud from his shoes, smiled uncertainly at her, at the same time lifting his hat.

"I have been told that I would find some one here by the name of Janice Bartley——"

CHAPTER II

"I AM NICHOLAS BARTLEY"

"I AM——" the stranger began to explain, when Janny cut him short.

"I know who you are." She said it in a tight, excited voice. "You are Nick." But she did not open the door wider or stand aside that the stranger might enter. She barred the way, staring at him with round questioning eyes.

Her interruption confused the man. He shifted his position from one foot to the other, smiled, frowned, smiled again, all in a moment.

"*You* are Janice Bartley?" he asked, and when Janny nodded he went on quickly. "Yes, I am Nicholas Bartley, your Uncle Nicholas, your father's brother. Are you not going to ask me in? I have come a long way."

Janny did not move from the door nor did her round eyes shift from the man's face. "It's taken you years and years to come," she charged solemnly. "I can only just remember how my father used to say: 'Maybe Nick will turn up.' I think he had written to you. Maybe you couldn't find the place. Was that why you didn't come?" Her voice was almost pleading.

Embarrassment crossed Nicholas Bartley's face, over which he had trouble maintaining his smile. "Yes, your father wrote to me. I *have* been a long time com-

ing. But I did not know, you see, that he was not living until——"

His explanation satisfied Janny. She drew to one side. "Come in," she invited.

At her bidding Nicholas Bartley entered the cabin. He stood still, uncertain what to do or say next. In his trim dark clothes he looked oddly out of place in the room. But Janny had seen many visitors ill at ease in Doctor John's cabin. And she had seen Doctor John and Mother Faire make them feel at home. Now she tried to imitate their warm-hearted hospitality; she drew up Doctor John's chair and motioned to it. She took the stranger's hat and coat.

"Sit right down. You must be tired. You can eat dinner with us. Doctor John will be here any minute. Mother Faire is away, you see. I am keeping house."

Nicholas Bartley sank into the chair as if he were grateful for its support. He took a square of white linen from an inner pocket and dabbed at his forehead with it. He needed to, for tiny beads of perspiration lay like a sprinkling of dew over it. Janny did not observe that, however. She had turned to the stove and was peeping into the steaming dishes.

"Why doesn't he talk?" she was thinking, a little desperately. "What ought I to say next? What *does* one say to a relation?"

Maybe Nicholas Bartley was thinking the same thing. What did one say to a new-found niece, especially to such a one? He had come prepared to find any kind of a niece but this self-reliant slip of a girl

in a long checked apron, who actually had not admitted him at once! If at any moment he had contemplated caressing her by way of breaking the ice he entertained no such thought now. With Janny's back turned to him, he ventured a long breath, restored his handkerchief to his pocket and cleared his throat.

"You see, I learned up North that your father had passed away——"

Janny wheeled upon him.

"You've been up North? Did you see Joe Primrose anywhere? Didn't any one even mention his name to you? Oh, tell me——" She ran to her uncle and clutched his arm, her dark face agleam with eagerness.

"Yes, I heard some men talk about a Joe Primrose. But no, I didn't see him."

Janny drew back, disappointed. Her eyes filled with tears.

"What—did they say—about him?" Her voice was scarcely more than a whisper. If this uncle told her anything had happened to Joe Primrose——

Nicholas Bartley looked at her intently. "They said it was strange, the way he had disappeared. Simply dropped out of sight. They think perhaps he has met with——"

Janny would not let him finish. "He hasn't," she contradicted. "Nothing could happen to Joe. Joe isn't afraid of anything. He's the strongest, bravest man ever lived. He'll come back. They'll find out that he will."

"Then you knew him very well, child?"

"He was my very best friend," Janny answered, turning away that this strange uncle might not see her lips tremble. "He was my father's best friend, too."

"It was up North that I learned that you were here in Painted Post, living with these good people who had taken you in. I was shocked, of course, to hear of your father's death. I blame myself for what must seem to you like neglect. I assure you, my dear, it is my intention to make it up to you." He struggled to put more warmth in his voice. "We really should know one another now that we've met, shouldn't we?" he finished, a little lamely.

Janny turned slowly from the stove. "I suppose so." She, too, tried to be more cordial. "It was real nice in you to come down here to see me." But her tone might have been Mrs. Ostrander's or Mrs. Angus's for its kind of sociability. It drew a laugh from Nicholas Bartley.

"Real nice!" he repeated, unconsciously mimicking Janny's tone. "You do not seem over-excited at finding an old uncle you've never seen. In stories you read usually——"

"But I didn't find you. You found me."

"Why, of course, that's so. And I find a young miss getting a dinner that smells very good. That would put your cousin to shame."

"A girl cousin?"

"Yes. Carol is fifteen. She's quite a young lady."

"I'm fifteen. Is she as grown-up as I am?"

The uncle's eyes swept Janny's length.

"She's taller. And she seems—well, a little more grown-up—quite a little more."

"Carol is a pretty name," Janny said thoughtfully. But still there was no warmth in her voice. "Can't she get dinner when her mother goes away?"

"You mean your aunt? Your Aunt Maddy? Child, you do not act as though you belonged to us. I don't believe Carol ever has been put to the test. It's—well, it's a little different back home, you see. But you will know us, child. I have been thinking——"

At that moment the door opened and Doctor John came in. Janny ran to him, took the book from under his arm and caught his hand with an affectionate clinging gesture.

"You're late. Dinner is almost spoiled. And we're going to have company. This is my Uncle Nicholas."

Doctor John expressed all the excitement that was lacking in Janny's greeting of the stranger. Cordial by instinct, he extended his hand at once to the other man, but in his first words echoed something of Janny's. "We looked for you a long time ago, Mr. Bartley."

As they faced one another, the two men presented a strong contrast. Nicholas Bartley was the taller by a head; as he talked he bent to Doctor John. His close-clipped hair, the trim set of his clothes on his lean figure, their conventional cut, suggested extreme fastidiousness. Doctor John wore a shabby belted jacket over a flannel shirt, faded and coarsened by many washings, his corduroy trousers tucked into the tops of heavy boots and belted to his hips by a curiously woven and

colored band of leather thongs, the gift of an adoring Indian guide. He had pulled a shapeless cap from his head and his gray hair stood up like springs of wire. But Janny, looking from her Uncle Nicholas to Doctor John, thought with a rush of pride how *dear* her Doctor John looked, with his roughened hair, his cheeks ruddy, his eyes crinkling at the corners, the way they did when he was thinking hard. This Nicholas Bartley must see at *once* how different her Doctor John was from any one else!

Mr. Nicholas Bartley was explaining to Doctor John why he had not come for six years, but Janny did not listen to what he said. She began to dish up the dinner. Thank goodness it had not spoiled by the delay! She remembered she had not laid the extra place at the table. She flew about, placing plates and a cup and knife and fork.

". . . I heard up in the North that my brother. . . . I came here as quickly as possible. . . . I intend to do everything in my power to make up for my neglect. . . . " The words meant nothing to her compared to the importance of her dinner. This uncle should see what she could do! And Doctor John would be pleased that everything was as nice as Mother Faire herself could make it.

" We can talk of that later," suddenly she heard Doctor John say. He was hanging his outer garments on a peg behind the door. " We will eat dinner now. You must be hungry after your journey. Have you ever been in this part of the country before? "

Now it would be like the other times when Doctor John had entertained some traveller at his board. Doctor John would ask questions about those places in the world in which he was interested and he would tell stories of the frontier—Janny knew just what stories. He would talk about everything and every one except himself. The guest would listen very hard and sometime during the visit he would say, "It's odd to find a man like you up here in these wilds." And Doctor John would crinkle his eyes up into slits trying to think what to answer, for *he* did not think it odd at all. It had been just like that when Mr. Carey, the government agent from Stafford, had come and Father Barnabas from the Indian Mission and the geology professor from Toronto and a score of others.

But Janny was wrong in her anticipations. This was not like those other times. Doctor John asked a few questions, but he did not ask them as if he really cared about them. Janny did not think he listened to the answers. He did not tell any stories of the frontier, either. And he kept looking at her and then, when her eyes met his, looking away quickly. And his eyes were more crinkly than ever. Nicholas Bartley, on his part, seemed to be talking at random, on any subject he could lay his tongue to quickly.

Slowly something of the unease of mind of the two men touched the girl. She began to see this uncle as a person with a claim on her. He was her father's very own brother. She looked closely at him when she could without his noticing it. He was not handsome, as her

father had been, yet there were mannerisms about him that stirred memories, a quick up-jerk of his head, his restless hands.

She had a cousin, too. Perhaps she had several. He really hadn't had time to tell her. Carol *was* a pretty name. "I wonder if she can swim," thought Janny, forgetting to eat in her mounting interest. "He didn't really think she could cook a dinner. And she's as old as I am——"

She blushed rosy red when Nicholas Bartley suddenly surprised her curious eyes upon him.

"I'm thinking now," she explained, "that it *is* awfully funny suddenly finding an uncle you didn't know you had. It's like opening a bran-new book and reading the first page. You don't know what's coming next."

Nicholas Bartley looked from her to Doctor John and back again. He began to make a little pattern on the cloth with his fork. Janny was to see him do that many times! Finally he cleared his throat, very much as a speaker does when about to deliver the address of a meeting.

"I am pleased, my dear, that at last you are evincing some interest in—what comes next, as you put it. I admit I was somewhat disconcerted at the impersonal quality of your reception. I let six years go by before seeking you out, I know, but your father let many more years than that go by without giving me any clue as to his whereabouts. However, all that is past and we need not dwell on it. I must tell you, though, that when

we were boys I was very fond of your father. For that reason I am prepared——" He dug the fork into the cloth; with his other hand he reached for his handkerchief. "I am prepared to offer you a home with us. You should know your aunt and your cousins—there are two boys besides Carol, you see."

Janny sat up very straight. Bright spots of color glowed through the tan of her cheeks. "I don't need a home!" she protested. She turned to Doctor John. "I've got one." Her eyes implored Doctor John to tell this strange uncle that she did not need a home!

But to her dismay Doctor John did not say anything. She had to go on, herself. "I don't love you or my aunt or my cousins. And I do love Doctor John and Mother Faire." She said it simply and conclusively as if it must settle forever the ridiculous suggestion.

However, it did not seem to settle it. Her uncle answered promptly. "Of course you do not love us yet, but I am certain that you will when you know us. Blood always tells. I feel that for my brother's sake I should give you a better schooling than you can possibly get up here, more opportunities for culture. Do you not agree with me, Doctor John?"

Her body taut with dread, Janny waited for Doctor John to speak. It could not happen—this stranger, even if he were an uncle, could not take her away from everything she knew and loved. But Doctor John was acting so queer! He had gone to the shelf and was looking for his pipe when he *knew* Mother Faire never let him keep it there; he *knew* it was in his pocket.

Doctor John found the pipe in his pocket. He held it a moment, unfilled, in his hand. Then he came back to the table and faced Nicholas Bartley.

"We have thought, my wife and I, that some day some one of Janny's father's family might come. We recognize your claim, of course. But we have given her for six years the affection and care we would have given a child of our own. She has not lacked for education—she knows a great deal more from books than most youngsters of her age and much that is not in books. As to culture—well, maybe down your way you don't mean the same thing by culture that we do up here. However, I suggest that we let the matter drop until my wife gets back. She'll be here on the afternoon boat. She will know best what we ought to do."

CHAPTER III

"YOUR FATHER WOULD WANT IT LIKE THAT"

MOTHER FAIRE returned home on the four-o'clock boat. Within an hour of her coming it was decided that Janny should go back with her uncle. Mother Faire spoke the word that decided it. She said: "I think your father would want it like that, Janny."

Waiting for Mother Faire to come, poor Janny had been racked by emotions so conflicting as to hurt her, physically. Though Doctor John and Nicholas Bartley had kept carefully from the question of Janny's going, it was there with the three of them, in their minds, haunting the tones of their voices, hanging in the silences that came when safe topics of talk failed the two men.

Janny longed to run down to the landing to meet Mother Faire, but when she said to Doctor John, "Hadn't I better go down and meet the boat?" he shook his head. "Little Mac will be there. He'll carry up the bundles." Of course little Mac always met each boat for the chance to earn a few pennies, but Doctor John's glance told her more; it warned her that it would not be playing fair to talk to Mother Faire first. They had made a truce and they must abide by it.

Janny saw Mother Faire when she turned by the big hemlock. Little Mac was carrying her bundles and

her bag, his stubby legs almost running to keep up with her quick step. "Here she comes!" Janny cried, at the window. "Now!" she thought, her breath catching.

Mother Faire showed no surprise when Doctor John gravely introduced Nicholas Bartley to her. "They told me at the landing you were here," she explained. "At least they said it was a stranger from the States who was inquiring for Janny."

She must have sensed immediately a significance in the moment. She put her bundles—those purchases over which she and Doctor John and Janny had conferred for weeks—unopened on a chair and laid her coat and hat over them. She drew another chair up to the table and sat down in it, motioning to Janny to sit down beside her. Under almost any other circumstances she would have gone in at once and changed her dress, but she did not think of that now. Her quiet gaze searched Nicholas Bartley's face.

Doctor John explained briefly that Nicholas Bartley wanted to take Janny home with him.

"I feel that the girl's place is with us—my brother's child," began Nicholas Bartley.

"Does your wife—Janny's aunt—feel as you do about it?" interrupted Mother Faire. What she really asked was: "Will she love Janny as I love her?" Janny heard those words as if Mother Faire had spoken them. Nicholas Bartley must have heard them, too. He answered that he had come at once to Painted Post to find Janny and had not yet written to his wife, but that he was certain she would feel as he did about Janny.

As they talked Janny sat straight with straining ears and tight throat. Sometimes she heard what they said, more often her heart hammered so that she couldn't. Sometimes her uncle's clipped voice and Doctor John's slower one became all mixed together. When now and then silences, heavy with thought, fell over them, the ticking of the clock, the whining of the wind, were voices, going on and on, talking, talking.

Janny thought it was awful. She did not want to go away from Painted Post. Fragments of its simple happy life passed through her excited mind, a procession of pictures accelerated to lightning speed. Then they faded away; even the things in the room swam in a blur. Under the table she caught at Mother Faire's hand and held it frantically.

Holding tight to Mother Faire, she could listen again. Nicholas Bartley was talking about his family —why, about her father! "I was older than my brother by ten years," he was saying. "As boys we were not particularly congenial. We rarely enjoyed the same things or held the same point of view. But perhaps if I had been more tolerant, tried to understand him—" He spread out his hands as if he were covering something. "Oh, well, the past is buried!" Janny thought her uncle like the itinerant preacher who had spent a week in Painted Post attempting to reform its citizens. *He* had had a way of wiping out the sins of Painted Post with a wide sweep of his arms. Only her father had had no sins to wipe away!

" Tell us about Carol—will Janny go to school with her? " asked Mother Faire, abruptly.

Nicholas Bartley said that Carol went to a small private school and it might not be possible to enter Janny in it at once, but there were good public schools in Newton. The boys went to one of these. The boys were twins, seventeen years old, though Charlie was so much more advanced in every way than Kevin that he seemed older. Then Janny's uncle spoke of music lessons and dancing lessons. Carol had had them since she was ten years old. He supposed Janny ought to have them, too. He spoke a little vaguely of other advantages girls should have; he'd been paying rather dearly for them for Carol and he stood ready to do the same thing for his new-found niece.

" What is your home like? " asked Mother Faire. With quiet insistence she drew out the picture. She displayed more interest than Janny.

" We still live in the old home where Janny's father lived when he was a boy," Nicholas Bartley answered. " It's a big place but I've made it comfortable. There's a nice garden now—my wife's fond of flowers and has a knack at making them grow. We've put in a tennis court and there's a little pond in the back where the youngsters skate in winter."

For the first time Janny spoke. " Did my father skate there when he was a boy? " she asked, on a quick breath.

" Why, yes, he did. He liked that kind of thing more than I did. He was always for out-of-door sports and

hunting for some new kind of adventure. A handsome lad—I think you are a little like him——"

No one said anything at once. In Janny's heart a yearning began to warm and grow, a yearning toward that boyhood that had been her father's, toward that home that had been his, toward the things he had liked to do—even toward this strange uncle who had known him. Mother Faire sat very still with downcast eyes. Presently she broke the silence.

"I think your father would want you to be there, Janny. I think he would want it like that—you back in the old home." Her voice was not quite steady but she managed a smile and she kept Janny's hand in hers.

So Mother Faire, speaking from a conviction born in her heart, decided it. Janny herself had likened the coming of her uncle to the opening of a bran-new book. Now, figuratively, she turned the cover and entered the story. She was its story. She saw herself going out into a world beyond Painted Post, even beyond Stafford, which heretofore had been the limit of any dreaming; she saw herself in the big house that had been her father's home; she saw the tennis court and the pond. It would be winter very soon and she would skate on it with her cousins. She wanted to know the cousins, especially the boys. There were not many boys in Painted Post; at least they never seemed like boys, for they so quickly grew to men's stature and men's work. These boy cousins would be like her father had been, loving adventure.

Mother Faire had carried her bundles into the bed-

room. At any other time Janny herself would have been unwrapping the purchases, struggling impatiently with tight knots of the string, but now, unheeding, she heard the crackle of the heavy wrapping paper, Mother Faire's step back and forth across the tiny bedroom.

The matter of Janny's going decided, a tension lifted between the two men. Doctor John lighted his pipe. Nicholas Bartley lighted the cigar Doctor John had refused. They talked of the silver mines up Shingle River. Nicholas Bartley was telling Doctor John that it was his first experience in a mining country.

"I went up there to look into the legality of some claims of a client of mine. A strange way for men to live! Excitement aplenty for those who want it, but such a waste of human energy. It should be confined to adventurers, outlaws, malcontents, the morons of our communities——"

At that Doctor John regarded the other man with astonishment. Sitting upright in his chair, as if his spine never relaxed from the conformities of addressing courts, Nicholas Bartley looked far indeed from any understanding of those men as Doctor John knew them! "We cannot agree on that," Doctor John answered in a slow, deep voice. "I've known men of the cities and I know the men here—a rugged, simple-hearted crew they are, but to my thinking they're more men than the harried fellows of your kind of business. I've stayed on the side lines but the life of the mining camps has touched me pretty closely—I know it. It's a man's job up there—it takes grit and a monumental

patience. They're fighting tremendous odds, but they know they're clean odds."

"There's romance, too, in the life," he went on, more lightly. "Dame Nature lures with a hand more beguiling than any sorceress of flesh and blood. She's more exacting, more cruel, she stoops to masquerade, but there's no halfway in her giving. It's all or nothing. Adventure, you may call it, but I think it is the eternal youngness in men that answers her challenge. I have seen old men's, hungry men's, desperate men's eyes kindle with hope when they hear only the magic word of some new treasure, I've seen them head up the trail with a quicker step than you or I could manage now."

How dear Doctor John was when he talked through the smoke of his pipe, his eyes crinkling, thought Janny. She sat a little removed from the two men, watching them. They seemed to have forgotten her presence for the moment. She was always most proud of Doctor John when he talked with that tone in his voice. Her Uncle Nicholas must respect it, too. Looking at her uncle, she thought: "He is not at all like Doctor John." He was not like anybody in Painted Post. He smoked so neatly. He sat so neatly in his chair—not sprawling easily, as the men she knew sat when they relaxed. He looked as if he were tied up neatly in a package.

She was enjoying this whimsical thought when her uncle's words galvanized her to attention. "I have one of your romances to thank for finding Janny. The men in Speculator Camp are in a frenzy over a lost mine farther north. 'Happyday,' they call it. Some

of the older Indians claim to have seen it. They tell a pretty story of it—how the silver runs in paths over the ground. The old landmarks have been washed out by a landslide and no one can find it now. But they believe—in the Speculator Camp—that a fellow called Joe Primrose has an old map—his father knew the location, had staked a claim but had not filed it when he died. They think he may have given it to his son; one of the prospectors says that the son told him once he had it. But Primrose has disappeared—been gone now for years. Then it was I heard that he had been a sort of partner of my brother Roger. They were conjecturing whether he might not have given the map to my brother. And I learned that Roger had died here in Painted Post—and left the little girl. I gave little heed to their talk of a lost mine but I ascertained the whereabouts of Janny at once."

Janny was about to speak when Doctor John rose so quickly from his chair that it fell over. His back was to Nicholas Bartley; his eyes were levelled hard on Janny. "So they've revived the old excitement of the Happyday?" he answered in an oddly deliberate voice. He carefully knocked the ashes from his pipe into the ash pan of the stove, then he turned to Nicholas Bartley. "There were no papers of any importance among your brother's belongings, his marriage certificate, an old diary and expense account of years back when he was in the West, some worthless claims and old blueprints. I have what there were and you may look them

over. If this Joe Primrose ever turns up, I will question him, or send him to you—if you are interested."

Janny drew in her breath softly. The little map she had *must* be the one of which they were talking. Happyday was printed on it. Had Doctor John forgotten that she had it? He must have forgotten. Or no, he had looked at her so strangely, so commandingly! It was that he did not want her to tell her uncle about it. She *had* almost told him—when her father had bade her give it to no one until Joe Primrose came back!

Mother Faire came back into the room at that moment. She had put on her everyday dress and was tying on her apron. "We're forgetting supper, Janny," she said briskly. "Fill the teakettle, child. Are there any potatoes to warm over?"

Janny hurried to help Mother Faire. To put wood on the fire, fill the kettle, do all the little tasks that were hers, made everything seem as if something tremendously different had not happened. Toby, roused by the bustle, got up from behind the stove, stretched, meowed, rubbed against Janny's ankles. Doctor John suggested to his guest that they walk down to the village and give the "women folks" a chance to get supper, as he often suggested when some one was staying at the cabin.

But though outwardly the simple routine of the little home went on in the usual way, the heart in Janny's breast still beat fast and more than once Mother Faire's voice failed on a suddenly lifting breath.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW TRAIL

For the next two days Painted Post knew an excitement it had not enjoyed since Robert Madelin, the half-breed trapper, was found murdered in a deserted shack two miles up the river. In an incredibly brief space of time every man, woman, and child in the village knew that the stranger *was* Janny Bartley's uncle, that he'd just happened to hear up in the silver country that Janny was living in Painted Post, that he was taking her back with him to his home in the States, that she was actually going on the afternoon boat on Saturday. Any one of these facts singly had the power to stir Painted Post deeply; together they wrought a frenzy. The women sought out Mother Faire and Janny at the Faire cabin, the men gathered in little groups to talk it over, the children drew away when Janny passed them and watched her passing with wide, incredulous eyes.

Nicholas Bartley had gone down to Stafford, where it was arranged Janny should meet him. He had spoken vaguely of business. Perhaps his business was writing of Janny to the family at Newton. He may have felt that he could write more fully and convincingly if a little removed from Janny and the Faire cabin.

"You don't mean to say you're letting the girl go off without any new clothes," demanded Mrs. Os-

trander. She had been in the Faire living room since early morning, ready to "lend a hand." She felt that it reflected upon all Painted Post that Janny should make the journey in her last year's best dress. "I've got that piece of serge home that I calculated to make up this winter but I don't know as I need it as much as Janny. I bought a pattern, too, last time I was to Stafford. If we all pitch in and sew we can clap together a dress in no time——" she offered in a burst of generosity.

Mother Faire had thought Janny's dress quite good enough for the journey, but she caught the friendliness of Mrs. Ostrander's voice and to Janny's surprise agreed that it would be "nice" if they could make the new dress. By noon Mrs. Ostrander was back with the pattern and the material. The good women cut and stitched with more energy than expertness and finished the garment by supper time.

"Now you'll have something that's stylish," Mrs. Ostrander declared with satisfaction. "Your folks will see that we're not so far behind the times up here in the woods, too."

Janny thought the garment very stylish, almost too nice to wear. She felt a sense of importance that Mrs. Ostrander and Mrs. MacGregor and the others had made it for her, that they cared what she wore. She felt important because she was the centre of the talk and bustle about her. Even eighty-five-year-old Grandma LaRoque was there, sitting in Doctor John's chair, her little eyes peering through her steel-rimmed glasses

and her head nodding. Mrs. Malvern had brought the baby because she could not come unless she did. She had put it on a blanket on the floor and given it a spool to play with and she poked it every now and then with her toe by way of attention. Sarah Todd had brought a cake, cocoanut with cream filling. It stood on the cupboard shelf where every one could see it. "It's just like some one had died," declared Mrs. Ostrander looking at the cake and at the women in the room. "Us all here and cakes and things. I might 'a brought a pie." "It's not at all like some one had died," retorted Mrs. MacGregor. "Janny's going away but 'tisn't as if she was laid out." Mrs MacGregor was steaming a piece of velvet to cover an old hat shape for Janny. The shape belonged to a past decade but every one agreed that, retrimmed, it would look as good as new. Mrs. MacGregor had spread out a collection of used "trimmings" for Janny to make a selection. "It's a good thing I never throw anything away." Janny told her anything would do. As if a hat mattered! Sarah Todd thought the wreath of yellow buttercups real pretty and girlish. Mother Faire moved quietly among them, doing things with her efficient hands and smiling on every one, when she would have much preferred shooing them all from the room.

"Her relations will find that you've done by her like she was your own," Mrs. MacGregor said to Mother Faire over the pins in her mouth. "She's smart for her age, too. You say there's a girl almost her age in the family?" Mrs. MacGregor knew there was;

every one in Painted Post knew about Carol and the twin boys and that Nicholas Bartley was a lawyer in the city in New York State. Mrs. MacGregor had asked the question merely to emphasize that the " relations " would find Janny as smart as the girl Carol. Janny knew what her question implied and exulted on her part that " they " would find that Mother Faire had brought her up as if she were her own girl. She would not go empty-handed to this new home. She would meet these cousins on their level and not be found wanting. She would do the things they did and do them as well—perhaps better.

The women talked about Janny's father. One of them said she always knew Roger Bartley had come from good stock. No one in Painted Post had ever seen *him* hanging around the back room of the Grand. In all Christian charitableness they forgot now that he had chosen to hold himself aloof from them all, to veil his coming and going in a mystery they had resented. They felt a kinship to the dead man. They recalled the invariable courteousness of his manner, his devotion to Janny. They spoke of Janny's own mother. " Poor young thing," they called her. " Probably she's looking down now on Janny, tickled as anything that things have turned out as they have," offered Mrs. Kenny, irreverently.

These women made her father seem more real to Janny. In a few days she would be among his own people, who would talk of him, too, tell her stories of her father when he was a boy.

In Janny's overcharged heart there was no room now for any grief at parting with Doctor John and Mother Faire. That was to come later, to overwhelm her, drown her in futile tears, but now her eyes were bright, her face unshadowed. The miles that lay between Painted Post and Newton were nothing to a fifteen-year-old girl, stepping in a story. She'd love Doctor John and Mother Faire just as much, nothing ever would change *that,* and she'd come back sometime, probably very soon. Being only fifteen, she did not question but that she would fit at once into the new surroundings. They would be different, of course, she expected that, but for that reason they would be more exciting. She would have more folks to love.

Though every now and then she hugged Toby with exaggerated fondness, she dropped him almost at once to run to something else. With tender intent she visited her favorite and secret haunts, the little alder wood beyond the clearing that years before she had peopled with fairy folk, the mossy rock down by the brook where she played house and where in summer the cardinal flowers grew in profusion, but her thoughts kept flying ahead to the tennis court in the new home. (She swung her right arm speculatively, determining to ask Charlie to teach her to play tennis.) She regarded the withered stalks of the vegetable garden back of the cabin that had been her pride since she was old enough to manage a hoe, but she really was thinking of that other garden where the aunt she never had seen could make anything grow. As she walked through the vil-

lage she saw not the rough straggling roads and unpainted shacks, but paved streets bordered by stately houses. These would be of brick, maybe white, like marble, and their windows would have lovely lace curtains through which a great many bright lights would shine. She bowed formally to the staring children, for in fancy she already was saluting new friends—new schoolmates.

Not until evening came were Mother Faire and Doctor John left alone with Janny. Janny always liked the evenings best, when the lamps made circles of light and shadow goblins hung in the corners, when the stove blinked its red isinglass eyes and Toby curled in its warmth, when Doctor John read and Mother Faire sewed or knit or crocheted. But of course this evening could not be like the others, because each of them knew that it was the last and each of them was trying to crowd that thought back by fussing over the little details of Janny's going. Mother Faire kept saying: "Goodness me, I'm sure I've forgotten something. Janny, did you count your handkerchiefs?"—as if handkerchiefs were more important than the growing ache in her heart. And Janny replied for the fifth time as excitedly as she had the first: "There are ten, Mother Faire, and the two new ones I got for Christmas that are still in the box."

When Mother Faire said anxiously: "I wonder if you have enough of everything," she answered herself: "But it isn't as if you wouldn't throw most of your things away when you get there—they won't be nice

enough for Janice Bartley, of Newton, New York," and her voice stopped on a quick breath. But the others gave no sign that they noticed it.

Doctor John smoked and watched Janny through the wreaths of smoke, every now and then taking his pipe from his mouth as if he were going to say something, then putting it back.

Along with other tender ceremonies, Janny planned, on that last evening, to take down from the shelves the books she loved best and bid them good-by, but the evening passed without her doing it. There was so much else to do and to talk about.

She made Mother Faire tell her about her own girlhood, of her pastimes, of the school she had attended. Mother Faire seemed eager to talk about it all. She talked very fast and her eyes were unusually bright. And Janny listened intently, picturing not Mother Faire so much as herself in the stories.

"But Newton won't be like Greenbury. It's so much bigger. There were nice young people, though, in my town and we did all the things they do in the cities, had real parties and dramatics and all sorts of jolly gatherings. One winter it was very gay. There was a dancing class and the master came out from Boston. He was very elegant. I can hear him now. 'Young ladies and gentlemen, observe me!' I had a new dress for the class, pink taffeta that swished deliciously, and I wore long white kid gloves——"

Janny saw a Mother Faire in pink taffeta and long white kid gloves with obvious difficulty. Between that

girl and the Mother Faire she knew was a difference she had not the experience to understand. "You never dance *now*," she accused, as if Mother Faire had failed to live up to those arts she had practised. "How do you know?" Mother Faire retorted on a laugh that was too high-pitched to be natural. "How do you know but that I am dancing inside of me often?" Her answer reconciled Janny. Of course—didn't she herself often feel all rhythm inside of her when something very nice happened, or when the day was particularly bright?

In the engaging excitement of getting ready to go, Janny had forgotten the significance of the little map she held and concerning which Doctor John had acted so strangely. But on that last morning, when she was helping Mother Faire pack her possessions into the shabby bag that had been her father's, she came upon the wallet. She was alone in the bedroom, standing before the little chest of drawers Doctor John had made for her. She took the paper out and looked at it excitedly. She traced her fingers over the straggling lines, read the sketchy words. Wealth in itself meant nothing to Janny but she felt a great excitement at possessing the key to a mystery. Her uncle had said every one was talking of this lost mine! And she, Janice Bartley, had the secret!

But secrets can be troublesome things. Janny, who never had had a secret in her life, felt oppressed, now, by this. She knew Doctor John was out in the garden. She went to him, the little map in her hand. She

would much rather leave it with him than take it with her into the new life.

He saw it at once in her hand. He closed his fingers over her fingers that held the map.

"No, Janny," he said, smiling. "Keep it—as your father told you."

"But——"

"I want you to win a place in your new home by your own precious worth, not buy it—with that!" and he nodded down at the paper. There was a little scorn in his voice that might have been for the map and what it implied or for the home of Nicholas Bartley. Janny did not understand it.

He saw her bewilderment and kissed it away, lifting her face toward him. "What a little girl to be turning her feet to new trails! The way may not be easy, child, and you won't always be pack-free, but carry your bundle on straight shoulders and keep your eyes not on the ground but to the vision ahead." Because he said it solemnly like a parting prayer Janny wanted to cry, but because it would be absurd to cry on this day or even to worry that the new trail might be hard, she laughed instead—laughed at dear Doctor John calling her a "little girl."

The village to a man was at the boat landing. Some of the women brought gifts to Janny, bulky packages tied with odd pieces of ribbon, home-made candy, a scarf, beads, Mrs. Kenny brought a hand-painted cup and saucer. Janny's arms were full. She hugged the gifts excitedly. "Why, it's like Christmas," she cried,

beaming on every one. She loved all of them. She always would love them. The men gave her advice, their voices loud with good feeling. The children crowded around her, peering at her with round eyes.

The *Nelly B.* waited at the dock. A spiral of smoke curled upward from its funnel and made a dusky fan in the sky. Her deck shone with scrubbing as if she too must do Janny honor. Her captain, one eye on the two half-breeds who were unloading and loading freight, shouted to Doctor John that he'd see that the "gal got to her uncle all right."

Janny thought there could never be in her whole life a moment more exciting. When the captain blew a mighty blast on the *Nelly B.'s* whistle she turned to Mother Faire. For one moment her cheek lay close against Mother Faire's. "I'll come back," she whispered. She did not notice that Mother Faire did not answer her. Every one was shouting "Good-by!" "Good luck!" "Oh, I'll come back," she answered gaily. A dozen hands swung her on to the boat. Doctor John followed her. He put down her bag, cupped her face with his hands and kissed her between the eyes. "I'll come back!" she said to him. And he did not answer.

"All ashore that's goin' ashore," bellowed the captain, laughing. Doctor John clambered back to the landing. The two half-breeds threw off the hawsers. The *Nelly B.* nosed slowly out into midstream.

There were no other passengers going down the river that afternoon. The two half-breeds who made

up the crew went below deck at once. The captain took his post at the wheel in the little pilot house atop the bridge. Janny stood alone, waving her hands to the people gathered on the boat landing, her eyes straining to hold Mother Faire's face, Doctor John's. There was something frightening in seeing those loved faces grow smaller and smaller, the distance widen between her and them. Presently a bend in the river took them quite out of sight.

She drew a long breath, faced about. The little yellow waves churned up by the boat's prow flashed in the sun like jewels, the forest pressed to the river's edge, trees of green and scarlet and ghost-gray, like a mad pageant flung to the arch of blue sky. Child of the North country as she was, Janny knew every mood of Nature, but this day seemed different. She'd always remember it, she thought. The beauty of it flooded through her. The chug-chug of the engine came back in echoes like muffled tom-toms, as if in the heart of the forest some secret band of elfs marshalled her on her way. The soft wind brought the mingled smell of the water, of the damp earth of the river banks, the mould of old, old leaves. To her excited fancy she stood still and the water and trees rushed by her.

Suddenly, from out of her aloneness a vague memory came to her, of another time when great trees of gold and red and brown rushed by her. She sat in the bottom of a canoe, gripping its sides. Her father knelt in the bow. She saw the turn of his head, heard the light note of his laughter. " Scared, little one? " But he had

laughed at such an idea. She tried to keep the memory, to shape it more clearly, but it faded as quickly as it came. She started. The captain was calling to her from the bridge: "You ain't scared, are ye, Miss Janny?" And the captain roared at his own question.

Janny stood alone on the deck as the *Nelly B.* carried her away from everything she knew and loved, a funny figure of a young girl in a shapeless hat wreathed with buttercups, tight braided hair, a dress cut down from a pattern for the well-cushioned Mrs. Ostrander and a shabby ulster that had been Mother Faire's. But she stood straight, with chin thrust out eagerly and eyes wide and shining, and she looked beyond the winding river and familiar forests to a world that had known her father. "Scared, little girl?" She laughed, too.

CHAPTER V

"THIS IS HOME"

THE Bartley house had been built when Maple Avenue was on the outskirts of Newton, when ground and brick and labor were cheap and deep bay windows the desirable thing in architecture. It set primly back from the street, behind orderly rows of maples, neatly cut lawns and imposing beds of "elephant's ears." Its brick walls sprawled and lifted with an impressive disregard for ground space. There were bay windows on every side and a square cupola of grimy window panes at the top of the roof. It was ornamented with curlycues of wood wherever such could be put. Ornate stanchions of wood supported the porches.

Janny, peeping at the house from the taxi while her uncle paid the driver, liked it at once. It looked like a jolly house, she thought. It looked like a nice, fat, old woman in a red dress. The bay windows on either side of the front door were the fat woman's cheeks, the porch was her mouth, the cornices at the gable peaks were frizzes of hair, the cupola was her topknot. She laughed, partly from her fancy, partly because she had come to her journey's end—her father's house.

"Well, this is home," said her uncle. "Give me your bag." Janny handed him the shabby bag and sprang out of the cab. "Home," she echoed softly. She followed her uncle and the taxi driver with the

bags up the cement walk to the front door, still staring at the house. It must be fun sitting in those broad windows—why, one could see up and down the street from them. Perhaps her father had liked to sit in them. Oh, where was the pond——

"I want to look at everything at once!" she exclaimed, her eagerness shaking her voice.

"You will have plenty of time to look at everything later. I am more interested in breakfast," her uncle answered. He, too, was scanning the house, but a little uneasily. "I wonder if any one's up." He opened the front door with his own key, stood aside and ceremoniously motioned to Janny to enter.

The square front hall was almost dark. Janny had no immediate impression of anything in it. A door opened somewhere above and presently a tall, slender woman came hurriedly down the stairs.

Of course it must be her aunt, Janny decided at once. "We did not expect you so early," she was explaining as she embraced Uncle Nicholas.

"This is Janny," said her uncle. Janny took a step forward.

Her aunt kissed her on the cheek. Janny thought it a very odd kiss; it felt like snow. She did not say anything because she did not know what to say. Her aunt held her hand the barest fraction of a moment, then dropped it.

"Come into the dining room. It's warmer there and we'll tell Celia to get some breakfast right away. I haven't had the furnace started yet, Nicholas. It

makes so much dust and we've just finished housecleaning, you know. And that good-for-nothing Tim is on another spree. He hasn't raked the leaves or done a thing in the garden. I'll have to find another man though I do not know where I'll find one. That new foundry is taking all the men—women, too. Celia's asked for another raise in pay and I'm afraid we'll have to manage to give it to her for I simply can't get any one as good as she is, though she isn't *very* good—"

The recital carried them into the dining room. Here the sun streamed cheerily through the long windows of a bay, filling the spacious, high-ceilinged room, glancing back from oak panels and old silver. Janny thought the room magnificent and she gasped a little as she looked around.

Mrs. Bartley was still talking. Now she was talking to the "Celia" through a door that led to a room beyond the dining room. "Mr. Bartley has come home, Celia. And—the girl I told you about yesterday. Is the coffee over? Hurry it, and some nice hot toast. You say there isn't any bread? Why, I ordered some —well, make muffins, then." She turned back to the room. "They're getting more careless every day at Flagg's. They never forget to put anything on their bill, though."

Janny, looking at her aunt in the clear light, thought her the most beautiful woman she ever had seen. She was slender like a young girl, with dainty curves at throat and shoulder and hips. The mothers in Painted Post were bulgy or stoop-shouldered. Aunt Maddy's

eyes were blue like bits of sky. Just now they were shadowed by annoyance at the carelessness of the groceryman, but Janny thought them even more beautiful for it. Her lips, drooping a little in the corners as if they had forgotten how to smile, were two thin lines of scarlet delicately traced in the white oval of her face. She wore a robe of violet color, frilled around the neck with lace and ribbon, from which her throat lifted white and so slender that it seemed to droop under the weight of even her small head. The loose sleeves of her garment billowed with every movement of her hands, showing the blue veins on her slender white arms. Janny thought of her own sturdy arms, more often than not chapped to the elbow. She glanced from the faint pinky shine of her aunt's finger tips to the stubby hands locked tight in her lap.

". . . Why didn't you telegraph what train you were taking from Buffalo, Nicholas? The children are sleeping. They're dedicating the City Hall, to-day, you remember; there's no school anywhere." She turned to Janny. "Please put your things on that chair until we go upstairs. I told Celia to fix a room. Maybe I'd better run up now and see if she did it——" She hurried out of the room, a flutter of delicate color, her feet, in their mules, making sharp click-clicks where the floor was bare between the rugs.

"Will your wife—her aunt—love Janny as we love her?" Mother Faire had asked. Perhaps Nicholas Bartley remembered that because suddenly he reached out and patted Janny's hand. "I should have telegraphed

—then they all would be up to welcome you." Then he added, a little hastily, "I should have told you, too —your aunt isn't very strong—she's nervous and little things upset her quickly. But you will get acquainted."

Janny thought of the frown that had shadowed her aunt's blue eyes, of her hands moving so restlessly that the pretty sleeves dropped away from them, of the kiss that had been like snow. Of course, if she was nervous, she was upset by their sudden coming, by there being no bread. The only nervous person Janny ever had known was Mrs. Manning, who was supposed by Painted Post to be given to "fits" and who, summer and winter, went about in a coarse woolen sacque and with a moth-eaten cap on her head, not in diaphanous garments such as her aunt wore. Mrs. Manning's face had been wrinkled and unlovely and Aunt Maddy's was like a pretty doll's. Janny felt a quick tenderness toward her aunt. She'd be very careful always to do little things for her, she'd be very quiet so as not to disturb her——

Celia came into the room. She was a colored woman of huge bulk, most of which was concealed now under a great checked apron, above which her round face emerged like a black moon. A smile cut across it from ear to ear, such a genial smile that Janny returned it at once.

"Law, Mistah Ba'tley, why didn't yo' tell folks yo' was acomin' 'fore daybreak? Celia'd had a nice bref-fast ready." She began to lay the places at the table. Janny watched her, fascinated; round doilies instead

of a cloth, shining knives and forks from one of the drawers of the heavy sideboard, delicate china. Celia chattered as she worked. "Things sho 'nough ar' at sixes and sevens with Miss Amy away and Ca'ol that lazy she cain't help he' Momma a-tall. And those boys —it's a good thing yo're to home, Mistah Ba'tley, to jack up Mastah Kevin, he's that good-fo'-nothin'. So this is the new cousin? I tol' Missus Ba'tley that it don' make any diff'ence to Celia how many stomachs I cook fer as long as I don' haf to stand on my poo' leg—the rheumatics is awful, Mistah Ba'tley. But, laws a massy, yo' sho' caused a dredful lot of 'citement when yo' wrote to dem you was bringin' *her*——"

"Celia!" cried Mr. Bartley sharply. Celia took a new tack quite placidly. "Did the Missus tell yo' that good-fo'-nothin' plumber ain't fixed the laundry taps yet? I done tol' the missus that Celia wan't a-go'n' to do 'nothe' tub of washin'. No sir, I'se too old to tote water on twelve dolla's a week, I is."

Nicholas Bartley began to eat his fruit, indicating to Janny to do likewise. Celia went back to the kitchen, still talking. Except that her voice was deep and lazy where Aunt Maddy's had been high-pitched, their plaint was the same—something wrong somewhere.

Sounds came from above stairs. A door opened and shut and then another. A boy's voice called: "What time is it, Carol? My watch has stopped."

"The children are getting up," explained Nicholas Bartley.

It did not occur to Janny to feel hurt that these new

cousins showed no eagerness to meet her. Even Celia's careless chatter had gone over her head. At approaching footsteps she put down her cup, too excited to drink the hot coffee.

With a double staccato of mule heels Aunt Maddy and Carol came into the dining room. Carol was almost as tall as her mother. Like her mother she wore a soft negligée that made her look very grown-up to Janny. She ran to her father and embraced him with pretty affection.

"Here is Janny, your cousin!" her father said to her. Carol turned.

"Oh, how do you do? I suppose Mamma has said welcome to our home and everything like that, hasn't she? I'm thrilled to death to meet a cousin I did not know I had until yesterday——" She regarded Janny with laughing eyes but there was no warmth in her voice and she did not offer so much as her hand in greeting.

Quite innocently, Janny mistook the laughter for amiability. "I did not know anything about *you* until a few days ago," she answered gaily. "I'm thrilled, too. I'm thrilled at everything." She looked it; a high color was dyeing her tanned cheeks, her eyes were shining.

Her greeting finished, Carol paid no more attention to Janny. She turned back to her father.

"Charlie's going to be in the color guard for the exercises this afternoon, Dad. They asked me to be in the pageant but I wouldn't. It was too silly. I'm

not even going. Joe Merry's having a bridge party. Has Mamma had time to tell you that I went down to Draper's and bought a new dress and had it charged? Well, I'll tell you now. I needed it dreadfully—honest, Dad, I wouldn't be seen *any*where in that blue silk again. I don't have half the things the other girls have, anyway."

She had sat down close to her father. Now she slipped her hand through the crook of his elbow and leaned her body until her cheek cuddled against his shoulder. Janny watched her in speechless delight. Certainly Carol was the stuff of which heroines are made—golden hair, *curly,* in pretty disorder, blue eyes like her mother's but clear of any shadow, a skin like a baby's, a scarlet mouth that dimpled and arched. The thought that this little bundle of beauty, curling now like a kitten against her father, was her very own cousin warmed Janny with pride. Carol was telling her father about a party she had gone to a few nights before. Janny saw Carol at the party, "really having a rush, Dad." She felt a vicarious excitement at Carol's good time.

With a great deal of noise a boy burst into the room. "Howdy, Dad." As Carol had, he embraced his father. Then he turned to Janny. "Is this the new cousin? Greetings!" He held out his hand. "I'm Charles Newbrook Bartley, at your command."

Janny's face flushed scarlet. She held out her own hand, which Charlie shook with exaggerated warmth. She stammered some word in answer, furious at her

awkwardness. She was glad he did not say anything more. He had pulled out a chair noisily and was calling to Celia: "Boil me two eggs, please, old Darkcloud!"

"Charlie!" rebuked his father.

"Charlie, *please* make less noise," chided his mother.

Carol laughed. "Oh, Celia doesn't mind anything Charlie says. If *I* called her that there'd be a fuss, though."

"Dad, have you told the others anything about your experiences up in that mining country? I want to know all about it. Glory, it must have been some fun!"

Janny's heart beat hard. She liked Charlie at once; she was glad he was her cousin—almost like a brother. He was very good-looking, fair like Carol; he laughed so easily. She watched his eyes kindling with interest, just waiting for his father to tell him something. She'd tell him stories, too, of that North country—stories she'd heard Doctor John tell.

"Where's Kevin?" asked Uncle Nicholas.

"Oh, he's always slow!" Charlie responded.

"He reads half the night. I saw a light under his door when I went to bed and that was after twelve."

"After twelve, Carol? On a school night?" put in her father gravely.

"There's no school to-day and if you hadn't come home this morning I'd have slept until noon. But you know Kevin ought not to read in bed."

"I can't see any difference reading in bed or sitting

with a crowd of girls giggling——" Charlie winked openly at Janny. She felt a little shiver of delight at his friendliness. Perhaps she ought to wink back.

Carol ignored him. She had affairs of her own to press. "Dad, I wish I could drop Chem. I hate it so and I can't see the least bit of good in a girl knowing all that stuff."

"But you dropped your Latin! For goodness' sake, what *are* you going to take?" Charlie answered before his father could.

Carol tossed her head. "I wasn't talking to you, Mr. Know-it-all. Mother says I may, if you consent, Dad. May I?"

"I agreed because you said you couldn't endure the smells," put in Mrs. Bartley. "It seems to me they must have something else you can take that is a little more suited to a girl like you."

Janny was listening with round eyes. Chemistry—that was what she had wanted to study and Doctor John had said it would be difficult because they had no laboratory. And Carol had dropped Latin! She loved Latin, she and Doctor John had studied it evenings. *She* wanted to take both Chemistry and Latin. But she did not speak her thought now.

"Do what you and your mother think best, Carol," Carol's father answered in a tone that implied that he didn't know what else to say. As he spoke he pushed aside his half-emptied cup. All at once Janny realized that he had eaten scarcely anything. And he had said he was very hungry!

Looking at her uncle, Janny saw that in some curious way he had changed. On the journey from Painted Post to Newton she had come to like her uncle. At first he had been quiet, apparently absorbed in deep speculations which she sensed were not pleasant, so she had taken upon herself the task of making him forget whatever worried him. She had kept up a fire of cheerful comment. It was not at all difficult—she really could not have done anything else, for she was bubbling with excitement, and with anticipation. She asked him so many questions that he laughed at her. She liked his face when he laughed, and, finding that her questions amused him, she asked more. She had had her reward in seeing all the little lines in his face smooth out, his tired eyes lighten. And now the lines were back again, more than there had been before; two deep ones brought his heavy eyebrows quite together. His eyes were all tired. With his fork he was making little creases on the doily before him.

"Well, what are you young people going to do with Janny to-day?" he asked suddenly. "Can you take her to your bridge party, Carol?"

Carol and Mrs. Bartley both exclaimed at once in protest. Carol put out her underlip. "Why, Dad—I can't. Joe Merry has her tables all made up—it's just our own crowd——"

"Really, Nicholas—anyway, perhaps the girl hasn't the right clothes."

"Perhaps she doesn't play the silly game," suggested Charlie.

Janny's face had turned from red to white and red again in confusion and sheer alarm.

"I don't play bridge," she admitted. But she added, not wanting these cousins to think her too lacking in accomplishments, "I play casino and hearts—and—and chess."

Carol laughed gaily in her relief. Charlie laughed, too. Nicholas Bartley exclaimed: "Chess? Who taught you to play chess?"

Janny did not have an opportunity to explain that Doctor John had taught her to play, for Carol began to talk to her mother. "Mother, will you shorten my new dress for me? I'd ruin it, I know. I don't see why Cousin Amy has to stay away so long! I think she does it on purpose, just knowing that we need her here."

Celia was removing the plates. "Land o'goodness, Miss Ca'ol, ain't you shamed to be begrudgin' Miss Amy the fust pleasurin' she's had since I kin rekamember?" she asked, pausing in the doorway with her burden of dishes only long enough to fire her rebuke.

Carol flushed angrily: "Mamma, Celia gets worse every day. Her daring to speak like that! Amy puts such ideas in her head."

Her father held up his hand protestingly.

"I think Amy *does* talk to Celia a little too much, Nicholas," Mrs. Bartley affirmed.

"She hasn't any one else to talk to," declared Charlie.

"Speaking of Amy—I've written to her that she must come back, now." Mrs. Bartley nodded her head

significantly toward Janny. She stood up quickly and her chiffons billowed about her. "Carol, will you take Janny up to her room? I want to talk to your father. Charlie will carry her—baggage." Mrs. Bartley hesitated a moment over just what to call the sorry bag she had seen in the hall.

Charlie jumped up with alacrity. "Forward!" he shrilled in a fine imitation of a hotel clerk's voice. He touched an imaginary cap, cupped his hand toward Janny for a tip, which jovial quips were lost upon the inexperienced girl. She responded to his laugh, however, with a wide smile.

As she followed him and Carol out of the dining room, Janny heard her aunt begin on a high, thin note: "Well, *now,* Nicholas, perhaps you'll tell me whether you've gone stark crazy or not——"

What now had bothered her aunt's nerves? Janny thought perhaps it was her Uncle Nicholas' not eating anything. Then in the excitement of mounting the long, narrow stairway she forgot her concern.

Carol was walking ahead stiffly. Charlie was pretending to wilt under the weight of the bag, stumbling up the steps, laughing. Janny laughed, too. It was easy to crowd back the beginnings of any misgivings. Her hand tightened on the smooth balustrade. It was so long and straight—probably her father had slid down it many a time!

A wide hall cut through the upper part of the house, from which different doors opened. But Carol led her past each of these to the end of the hall, down a little

flight of steps into a narrower passageway, where she stopped before an open door. "Mother said you could sleep in here for a while. It isn't very nice but then you can't expect much on such short notice."

Janny was not dismayed at the smallness of the room; her quick eyes went to the tree branches that brushed the one window pane, through which she glimpsed the sheen of water in a pattern of bright color.

Charlie had dropped her bag with an exaggerated groan. "Your trunks will be up at once, madame. Will you wish ice water? The fire escape is at the end of the hall." He waved his hand over the tiny dimensions of the room. "Perhaps later we can offer you one of our higher-priced accommodations. But you will find this very comfortable. Here is the commodious bureau used last by one stylish Lizzie Moriarity, whom Celia threw out the back door in a rage. You may think that yonder bed is filled with rocks, but I assure you that a hundred years ago it was as good a mattress as could be bought——"

"Charlie, you're not a bit funny. Go downstairs," said Carol icily.

Janny thought he was very funny—not that she knew what he was trying to say, but she liked the laugh in his voice. With a wave of his hand he ran off. Carol hesitated on the doorsill.

"Can I help you? If I can't I'll let you unpack. I've got oodles of things to do." Then she ran away, as Charlie had run, with a quick click-click of heels.

Janny shut the door quickly, crossed the faded rug

to the window. She pressed her face against it. That was the pond out there beyond the little clump of willows; there were apple trees and a very old grape-vine straggling over a rickety trellis, a few withered leaves clinging to the thick trunks. But suddenly she saw it all through a mist of tears. She blinked them away. Tears—why should she cry?

Resolutely, briskly, she fell to unpacking her bag. In the corner there was an old wardrobe for her dresses, which, like the bureau, sadly needed a coat of varnish. Who was Lizzie, whom Celia had thrown out the back door? Who was Cousin Amy? Her uncle had not spoken of her. Why had her uncle changed so suddenly as his family gathered about him? *Did* she like Carol? The questions hammered through her determination to be happy, here in her father's house.

Her shut door dulled the sounds of activity in the house. She supposed Carol was busy doing all those things she had to do, perhaps her aunt and uncle were still talking. She wondered again why her aunt had asked Uncle Nicholas if he'd gone stark crazy.

She took out the undergarments Mother Faire had so neatly packed. She deliberated over whether to put them in the second or the third drawer of the bureau. She smiled at having so many drawers for her scant possessions. She thought of the little chest she had used at home. Home—the word stabbed her like a knife blade. It was so very far away and it wasn't home now; *this* was home.

A panic threatened her. In a little while she must

open her door and go downstairs again, seek out her aunt and Carol; in a little while she must go to school, meet strange girls and boys, do strange things—like going to bridge parties, perhaps. But she put away the disturbing thoughts.

She wouldn't unpack all her things yet, she decided —there was so much time to do it. She'd write to Mother Faire and Doctor John. She took out the pad of paper and the pencil she had brought with her for the purpose. She sat down on the one chair at the window.

"Dearest, dearest Mother Faire and Doctor John," she began. Then she chewed the pencil end. Would she tell them first how pretty Carol was and Aunt Maddy—how much she was going to like them when she knew them better? No, she'd write first about Charlie, how much she liked him, already. No— Somehow she could not begin. Something was wrong about it all and she did not know what it was. She put the pad aside. She'd go downstairs and outdoors and explore the garden and run down to the pond. She'd see everything before she wrote the letter. Why, she hadn't met Kevin yet——

CHAPTER VI

NEW FACES

JANNY had not run out of doors as she had planned. She got as far as the hall, turned and went back to her room. She rearranged her things in her bureau, sat down and listened to outside sounds, classifying them as she heard them. Her uncle's voice, he was saying good-by in the hall; he'd forgotten her. Carol's voice singing somewhere. A gruff tone mingling with Charlie's—that must be Kevin. Some one right under her, cheerily chanting: "I'se standin' in de need ob prayer." Celia. There were sounds of automobiles passing, the honk of horns and the rumble of trucks, a steady overtone of city noises strange to Janny's ears.

She went to the window and looked out at the pond. It was pretty with the willows bending to it. The willows were a yellowish green. Why, there was a rough seat in one of them! She'd climb to it and sit there. It would be a pleasant place to read. That must be Aunt Maddy's garden where a few chrysanthemums were still blooming. Funny, that Aunt Maddy, with her nerves, should have a knack at making things grow!

It was not so much courage as a terror that she was going to cry that finally drove Janny out of her room. She could not understand why she wanted to cry. It was silly, when she was so excited, really happy. She walked determinedly down the stairs.

No one was about. This gave her assurance. She'd look over the house—her father's house. She peeped into the doors opening from the hall. Whatever did one do with so much room, she wondered. "You could put all of Doctor John's cabin into this one," she said aloud as she went into the parlor. The thought made her laugh. Laughing quite drove away that disturbing feeling of tears inside of her.

She stepped on tiptoe across the rugs; the room was far too grand for carefree feet! It looked as if it were waiting for a party. The heavy curtains at the bay windows hung stiffly and the gilt chairs stood about as precisely as if they'd been told that they'd be punished within an inch of their lives if they moved. There were innumerable little shiny-topped tables laden with bric-à-brac. The mantel bore tall vases, candelabra, an ornate Cupid-crowned clock. The fireplace was filled with dried flowers dipped in gold and silver. There were electric lamps with varicolored silk shades, heavily fringed. On the walls hung framed portraits, their canvases dull-toned against the bright green of the wall paper. As her glance swept to these she exclaimed softly. They must be Bartleys! Perhaps among them there was one of her father. She went from one to the other, seeking, with quick-beating heart, for the boy's face which she knew she would recognize at once. There was an old bewhiskered man, with high-colored cheeks, another in the uniform of a Civil War soldier, a sword against his hip, a gentle-faced woman, her hair standing out like two smooth

wings from a part over her forehead. Yes, here was Uncle Nicholas! She knew it was he, it was his mouth and his eyes and his hands. She ran to the last picture in a corner of the room. But it was a fat old man with beady eyes and long nose and brocaded waistcoat.

She took her disappointment to the bay window and forgot it almost at once. The heavy draperies closed behind her, shutting her from the room. There was a deep seat with plump cushions. The windows looked out upon the lawn and trees and street beyond. This would be a nice place to sit and read, Janny thought —when she could not sit in the seat in the willow tree.

Across from the parlor a door opened into a room that was circled with bookcases filled with books. Janny's heart went out gaily to them, as to old friends. But they really did not look friendly, as Doctor John's did, on his home-made shelves. Her fingers had no itch to reach for them. The glass doors were forbidding. There was a flat-topped desk and a swivel chair near a window. By the neatness of the desk things, by the neat way the cushion stood upright in the chair, she knew it was her uncle's desk; she could see him sitting very straight at it. Maybe Aunt Maddy sat in that chair opposite the desk, talking to him, telling him about the things that were wrong in the house.

She retreated from the room, holding her breath, and closed the door cautiously behind her. She opened the front door and slipped out of doors. The keen, sweet air whipped her face. Oh, this was better! She wanted to run. Why, she hadn't run, even so much as

skipped fast, since she took the boat at Painted Post. She drew in a deep breath. The restraint that had held her in tight bounds snapped. She ran down the walk to the street, back again. She did not care who saw her, Carol, or Charlie or Kevin—even Aunt Maddy. She scuffled through the yellow and red leaves that lay thickly over the ground. She circled the beds of elephant's ears. She took a path to the back of the house. She must see *everything*.

As she explored she kept telling herself: "This is where my father lived." She found the pond. She saw some lily pads, sodden blotches of yellow in the pale water. "Lily Pond, I shall call it," she thought. At great risk to her new dress she climbed to the old seat in the tree. The pale-yellow leaves fell around her like a delicate curtain. She sat there, swinging her legs in unutterable contentment. "Maybe Carol and the boys will let me call this my seat."

From her perch she surveyed the surrounding grounds, drab now in the waste of autumn. She wondered who lived in the houses adjoining. The houses were not as nice as Uncle Nicholas'—the yards were untidy. But maybe young people lived there—Carol's friends. Well, soon they'd be her friends, too.

Her survey went beyond the garden and the space given to clothes poles to a dilapidated barn next to the new garage. That, too, might offer a "secret" place for her, who loved secret places to which to retire with thoughts too precious to share with any one else. She climbed down to the ground, eager to explore it.

The door of the barn hung partly open on broken hinges. She peeped cautiously in. It was almost dark inside, for the daylight had little chance to penetrate the dusty, cobwebby squares of windows. She made out an old canopy-topped carriage, coated with dust, its cushions popping, its fringes frayed, its high springs rusted. Old, unused garden implements stood about with new shiny ones. There was a coil of hose and a pile of old flowerpots and empty paint cans. And over on one side, a little removed from the litter, on a high stool before a rough table, sat a boy.

The boy was so intent upon his occupation that he did not notice Janny at the door. He was moving little wooden figures around in what to Janny looked like the remnants of an old doll's house. His head and shoulders hung over his task, his long legs were twined tightly around the stool legs.

Janny held her breath. Who on earth could he be? —scarcely a hired man playing with dollettes in a doll's house in the middle of a fine morning. The boy wore an old coat daubed with paint, the collar of his shirt was open and soiled, his socks hung down over the tops of his shoes, his hair was tumbled about his head.

The tumbled hair was red—very red, so that it blazed in the dusty light of the old barn. Her father had had red hair! Uncle Nicholas had said once on the journey: "Kevin has red hair like your father's—" So this was Kevin! But at once Janny, scanning the untidy figure, the freckled cheek under the tousled hair, thought of Charlie and his good-looking sleekness. She

thought of Charlie's laughing eyes. This boy was scowling heavily in his absorption.

She turned to run away but her step made a crunching sound on the gravel. The red head shot up, scowling eyes met hers.

"Hullo," Janny said nervously. "I'm Janny Bartley. I suppose you're Kevin."

The boy managed a fleeting smile but the scowl did not vanish from his forehead. He hastily flung out one arm across the doll's house.

"You guessed right. I'm Kevin. How do you do?"

Janny stepped carefully over the hose and the paint cans. She did not mind his unfriendliness; she was immensely curious about the doll's house. "Can I come in? I'm getting acquainted with everything."

"There's nothing in here to see," exclaimed Kevin in a growling voice.

"*You* seem very busy," retorted Janny.

"I am." Kevin clipped the words short. "That ought to tell you to get out where you're not wanted," his eyes said rudely.

Janny's own eyes flashed back: "You're a horrid rude boy and I am not going to like *you*!" However, having bridged the paint pots and the hose she stood her ground. She smiled with deceiving amiability. "Aren't you going to be in that thing Charlie's in—to-day?"

"No. They didn't ask me. I wouldn't if they had asked me. It's—silly." The boy's tone was surly.

Now he put his whole body between Janny and the doll's house.

Janny wanted to say that it didn't seem any sillier than what he appeared to be doing, but her courage failed her before Kevin's persistent unfriendliness. She began to retreat, embarrassed.

"I am afraid I am interrupting you," she said, her cheeks red. "I was just trying to make friends—I'm sorry."

"Oh, *that's* all right." Kevin reddened, too. But he was so plainly relieved at her going that Janny laughed inwardly. Certainly she had disturbed him at some secret! She wondered what he would have done if it had been Carol or Charlie who had intruded upon him. Probably he'd have thrown a paint can at them!

As she walked back to the pond she thought of Kevin and his strange, rude manner. "I'm not going to like him at all!" she told herself regretfully. How could he be Charlie's twin?—laughing, gay, handsome Charlie.

She decided she would go to her room and write her letter, for now she could tell Mother Faire how much more she liked Carol and Charlie than Kevin. She went into the house, through the quiet halls to her little room. Already it seemed friendly, hers. She sat down and wrote rapidly, happily.

Presently Celia's call took her down to lunch. "Now, Missy What's-yo'-name—jes you come down heah and eat a snack off'n the kitchen table. No use Celia's totin' vittals jus' for you-all!"

The "vittals" were very good. The kitchen was sunny and pleasant with savory odors. Celia was friendly, talkative. Janny learned that Carol and Charlie were "out," that her aunt was in her room with a headache. Janny wanted to ask Celia why Kevin did not come in to eat, too, maybe ask her about the doll's house, but having made up her mind not to like Kevin, she decided it beneath her to care what he did.

Celia talked of Miss Amy. When she announced joyfully that Miss Amy was coming back, Janny ventured a timid: "Who *is* Miss Amy?"

"Miss Amy? Yo'll know sure 'nuff when she comes. It's 'Oh, Amy, will yo'-all do dis and do dat.' Don' know what any one 'd do 'cept for Miss Amy. And now when her-all's gone away don' they send for her back first thing Mistah Ba'tley writes tellin' youse a-comin'."

Though Janny did not yet know who Miss Amy was, she did not press the question, feeling abashed that she herself was the cause of Amy being recalled from her "pleasurin'." She remembered, too, that her aunt had charged this Amy with talking too much to Celia. She must not offend in the same way. She ate rapidly to get back the sooner to her letter. She must tell Doctor John and Mother Faire about the house, the big rooms, the bookshelves that were behind glass, about Celia, too, and the nice big kitchen and the huge cupboards and the gas stove that you simply put a match to to get a fire——

The afternoon wore on slowly. Janny finished her

letter, sealed it, kissed it, fingered its plumpness. She pictured her beloved Doctor John and Mother Faire reading, rereading it. Doctor John would carry it to the cabin. "Here's a letter from Janny." He'd put on his glasses and read it aloud. Mother Faire would lean over his shoulder. Then she'd tell Mrs. MacGregor and Mrs. Ostrander about the letter, about Carol and Charlie and the big house where Janny's father had lived when he was a little boy. Oh, she'd write often, maybe every day, tell them every little thing that happened.

But it wasn't safe thinking too long about Doctor John and Mother Faire. Janny went downstairs again. She would find a book to read and read it until some one came home.

She ventured again into her uncle's room. Timidly she searched the forbidding shelves of books for a familiar, friendly title. Finding a copy of "Jane Eyre," she pounced upon it eagerly. It was bound in heavy leather that felt elegant and stiff in her hands. But it was an old friend, she had read it over again and again. Hugging it to her, she took it to the bay window in the parlor.

She curled herself on the wide window seat. The heavy curtains shut her away from the parlor, a pleasant world of deepening sunshine and color lay beyond the windows. Soon she was absorbed in her book. The moments passed on swift wings.

She was brought sharply out of her happy absorption by Carol's voice beyond the curtains.

" For goodness' sake come in here a minute, Charlie. Now, will you tell me what in the world we're going to do with her? Did you ever see such a gawk as she is in that awful dress? "

Janny's first impulse was to make her presence known. But a sudden shyness held her until it was too late. It was too late—for Charlie's easy laughter filled the room beyond the curtains.

" Our new cousin! Oh, *boy*! "

The mocking ridicule of his words froze Janny where she sat. She could not move, she could not speak. They meant *her*!

" Oh, *you* can laugh, Charlie Bartley. *You* won't have to be seen with her. I think Dad's crazy. He could have left her where he found her."

" I'd like to be 'round when you introduce her to the girls——"

" Well, you won't be around when I introduce her for I'm not going to do anything of the kind. I'm not going to make myself a laughingstock for a cousin I did not know I had until a day or so ago. I told Mamma so. And she said I needn't. She said she thought Dad was crazy, too, bringing her here. No knowing *what* she's like. You *know* there was something wrong about her father. You've never heard any one talk about him, now, have you, Charlie? She may be like him. And most certainly I'm not going to sponsor some one who may turn out to be——"

" Hark ! That's Dad's key. Better not let him know

how you feel 'til he knows you bought that string of pearls, Sis."

Janny heard them rush into the hall. She heard Carol's "Hullo, Dad. It's *so* nice to have you home!" Now her voice was gay, soft, affectionate.

Janny sat rigid, on the edge of the window seat. She did not think she could ever move again, she did not want to move. Her hands were locked tight in her lap. Her eyes fell to them and to the dress Carol had scorned. All at once she thought of the love that had gone into the making of the dress —of the Painted Post women who had basted and stitched so furiously that she might have it. She would *not* be ashamed of it, even if Carol despised it! Carol! Then Carol had not meant she was "thrilled" at her coming. Carol did not want to be friends! She burned with the hurt of Carol's unkindness. She stepped out from the bay, stalked through the long parlor, her face scarlet, her head high. She could hear Uncle Nicholas and Carol and Charlie talking in the room of books. But she went past the door, up the stairs, with deliberate step to show them, to show herself, that she would not run away from their ridicule.

In her little room she went to the window and stared out at the pond. But she did not see the pond.

". . . something wrong about her father——" Carol had said that. How *dared* she!

Slowly all those high hopes with which she had bolstered her courage melted away, leaving her heart heavy with bewilderment, acute loneliness. Her unhappy

eyes fell upon the fat letter she had written to Mother Faire and Doctor John. "I am going to love everything. It's all very different——" she had written, "but it is exciting. I like my new relations, too, and I think they will like me——" She had written lines and lines about Carol and Charlie and Aunt Maddy, and about Kevin's queerness. Now she took up the letter, stared at it dully as if wondering who had written it. Then she slowly tore it across, tore it with difficulty because it was so fat.

CHAPTER VII

THE POOR RELATION

JANNY stalked down the stairs to dinner with the same deliberate step with which she had gone to her room. No one—especially Carol and Charlie—should know that her heart was a smarting thing in her breast!

The family were gathered around the table. "Sit there, Janice," said Mrs. Bartley. Uncle Nicholas smiled at her. Carol gave her a careless nod. Charlie grinned cheerfully.

But beyond that no one noticed her. She slipped into the chair Aunt Maddy had indicated, dropped her eyes to the confusing number of forks and spoons and knives at her place.

Carol was gaily chattering, her talk lightly ranging over what "Joe" and "Claire" and "Jean" and "Lois" had worn at the bridge party, the prizes, the new kind of sandwiches that had been served "by a butler, Mamma. I wish we could have one, Celia's such a mess." She retold bits of gossip gleaned over the bridge tables. Now and then Charlie broke in with teasing banter. Nicholas Bartley or Mrs. Bartley answered when Carol addressed some comment directly to them; for the most part they sat in silence.

The formality of the dinner was as strange to poor Janny as the substance of Carol's talk. The white linen, the gleaming silver, the delicate china, the hot-house

flowers, the deliberate service, oppressed her. Even Celia, in starched cap and apron, shuffling back and forth, back and forth, seemed a different Celia from the one who had given her her lunch in the kitchen.

When Uncle Nicholas, suddenly breaking his silence, asked Janny if she had had a pleasant day, she flushed and stammered over her answer. She managed: "Oh, yes," but no more. But Uncle Nicholas seemed satisfied with that. "That's nice," he said and fell quiet again.

Miserable, self-conscious, Janny went through the processes of eating, but the food was tasteless in her mouth and her throat hurt with each swallow. She felt a million miles away from these people gathered around the table, even from Uncle Nicholas. She felt farther still from Painted Post. She'd feel like this always and always, she thought.

Suddenly they all heard the front door open. "Maybe that's Amy," Mrs. Bartley exclaimed. "Oh, I hope so," Carol cried. Charlie dashed to the hall. Celia paused expectantly, half-way to the kitchen door.

Something of their expectancy transmitted itself to Janny. She found herself looking eagerly for the coming of this Cousin Amy.

A diminutive woman in a plain coat and hat followed Charlie back into the dining room. She came in briskly, taking off her hat with one plump pink hand and smoothing back her hair with the other. "Well, I'm back," she announced in a voice like the chirp of a sparrow. She beamed cheerfully on them all. "I'll sit

right here, Celia. Don't fuss for me. I had some tea at the junction and I'm not a mite hungry. Got your letter this morning, Maddy, and I caught the noon train." Her twinkling eyes focussed on Janny. "So this is the new cousin! Janice! What a pretty name."

Caught staring, Janny blushed. But this Cousin Amy was so unlike the others that she could not do anything else but stare. Miss Amy's round face above the neat white collar of her waist had the serenity of a happy child, her eyes beamed and her small mouth between the pink cheeks dimpled with good cheer. Except for the gray hair smoothed back so sleek that it looked like a hood around her face, she might have been a child, indeed.

"It's nice to have you here, Janice," she was saying, her eyes twinkling more than ever and the dimpling mouth widening with a warm smile.

To Janny it seemed as if with Miss Amy's coming an ease fell over all of them. The frown disappeared from her Uncle Nicholas' face. Even Celia's step grew more willing. Watching Miss Amy, listening to her, Janny herself forgot the smart of Carol's and Charlie's ridicule, her overwhelming loneliness.

But, dinner over, there was still the long evening for her to face. However, Miss Amy saved that. "Now come up with me, Janice, while I put my things away. I expect Carol has something she has to do. And we've got to get acquainted, haven't we?"

Janny followed her eagerly. Miss Amy took her to the room next to her own and shut the door.

"There, now. You sit down while I unpack. When did you get here? This morning? Then I expect you're all settled. Dear me, I remember the day I first came. It was twelve years ago but it might be only yesterday for the way I remember it."

"I'll remember to-day as long as I live," thought Janny, grimly. But she did not answer aloud and Miss Amy did not look for an answer. She was moving about the room with brisk steps.

The room was like Miss Amy herself; it was as different from the other rooms of the house as Miss Amy was different from the other Bartleys. Here hung no formidable ancestors; no gilt- and damask-cushioned furniture stood about in touch-me-not order. The chairs looked as if, in some invasion of new luxury, they had been discarded and Miss Amy had taken them in, dressed their old age with crocheted tidies and fat, neat-cornered cushions. Photographs, old valentines, Easter and Christmas cards, adorned bureau and walls, on the whatnot in the corner was an odd collection of souvenirs, precious to their owner, a glass paper-weight enclosing a colored picture of the Capitol at Washington, a polished abalone shell, a burnt-wood box from the St. Louis Fair, a hand-painted jar of old rose leaves. On a table in the centre of the room were neatly spread out old magazines, fashion books, a worn Bible. There was a basket on it heaped with stockings, Bartley stockings waiting for Miss Amy's plump fingers to darn, and next to that a button box. The curtains at the window were faded and the rugs on the floor were

faded, but in the wornness of it all was a hominess that wrapped Janny about like a sheltering garment. The closed door shut from her for the moment all the vexations and trials of the day. At Miss Amy's bidding she sat down in one of the rocking-chairs.

Miss Amy patted a pile of cotton underwear down into her bureau drawer. "You see, I'm a poor relation of the family," she explained quite cheerfully. "Nicholas found me sort of left hanging out on our bough of the tree. I was making a living, though. 'Twas skimpy—but skimpy living goes a long way in Franklinville, where I came from. I worked in Sarah Eames's millinery shop and it was nice work. I always liked fussing with the ribbons and flowers and things. But goodness to Betsy, a female cousin of Nicholas Bartley, even twice removed, couldn't be out on the world while he had a roof to cover her. He talked me straight here. He thought it was his duty and he sets an awful lot of store, child, on doing his duty. Don't know as I ever knew a man set more. Sometimes I wish I hadn't listened to him. I get sort of homesick even now for that room back of the millinery shop. It was real cosy. Often the women would come back and sit and wait for their hats and Sarah'd put the kettle over and we'd all have a cup of tea, sociable-like. But when I feel one of those spells coming over me I say to myself: 'Amy Bartley, you're a fool. Sarah Eames's under the ground and they're selling sugar and spices in that shop and where'd you be if it wasn't for the generosity of Nich-

olas Bartley giving you a warm room and three square meals a day.' I tell myself that."

"Are you happy here?" asked Janny, her question prompted by her own need. She *had* to know.

Miss Amy answered with a heartiness that cheered her.

"Why, yes, I'm happy. I guess a body can be happy anywhere if he makes up his mind to be. That's it—the making up one's mind. I've sort of fitted in somehow. Wasn't easy at first. I'm not like Maddy's kind. But folks are all different and every sort of folks has good points and bad points, I suppose, and I made up my mind I'd put my good points forward. I've helped with the children. And I've helped Celia with the house. There's more work here than one pair of hands can do. I've taught them to need me, Janny, just the way Sarah Eames needed me. She used to say often that she didn't know what she'd do without me, and that was almost as good as my week's pay. Make folks need you and then you feel you belong, Janny."

Janny remembered Carol's exasperated: "Why did Cousin Amy have to go away?" and her welcome that had been warm with real affection.

"But this isn't getting acquainted—just talking about myself. I want to know all about you. Maddy wrote that Nicholas found you up North somewhere. I couldn't believe my eyes when I read her letter. And he packed you right up and brought you home with him? That's like him. Tell me more about it." And

Miss Amy came and sat down next to Janny and took one of her hands in her two plump ones.

A flood of words let loose from Janny's lips. She told Miss Amy of Painted Post and dear Doctor John and Mother Faire and the little home, of Uncle Nicholas' coming and taking her away.

Miss Amy nodded. "He'd do it that way—if it was what he thought he ought to do, he'd do it on the minute and strong horses couldn't stop him. That's the way he got me to come."

Laughing a little shakily, Janny told of the excitement in Painted Post, of the women gathering in the cabin—of the making of the new dress.

"Same as with me—why, Sarah Eames shut up her shop to get me ready. You'd have thought I was going to get married for the fussing. That's a pretty dress and you can see just looking at it how they wanted to do it to show you that they were real fond of you. I've got the jacket now that Sarah Eames's cousin cut down for me from one of her own. It's worn to a rag but I keep it so's to remember the way they all fussed and stitched."

"I shall keep this dress," said Janny, stroking its folds proudly.

"We'll make some more. I'm a great hand to find bargains and I love to sew, and Nicholas will want you to look nice. We'll look around soon's ever we can."

Then Miss Amy began to talk of the "children," as she called the Bartley young people. Ascertaining Janny's age to the month, she exclaimed that Carol was

only a little older. "You'll be good chums." She must have seen doubt in Janny's face, for she added quickly: "Of course you can't be chums all in a minute. Carol's been the only girl around here for so long that she's going to be a little jealous at first, but you'll win her—you'll find that you will."

Janny could agree with Miss Amy on Charlie's good points—Charlie with the ready laughter. Miss Amy talked of Kevin, too. "Poor Kevin," she called him. Kevin'd always been one to make mistakes, clumsy, stumbling over things, dropping things, forgetting things. "Poor Kevin."

"Why, I believe she likes Kevin better than Charlie," thought Janny. *She* did not. While Miss Amy talked of the boys she was contrasting in her mind Kevin's sullen face with Charlie's smile.

Presently Miss Amy sent her off to bed. "Here I've kept you listening to me talk when you must be dead for sleep. We'll have lots of nice visits—you run in here whenever you have a mind to." She put her arms around Janny and kissed her.

In her own room Janny took off the serge dress Carol had ridiculed and hung it carefully away. She'd keep it always just as Miss Amy had kept the jacket. Miss Amy had said they'd go shopping and buy bargains and that she'd make her some more clothes. They'd be like Carol's, perhaps. She studied her reflection in the little square mirror over the bureau, trying to see herself in the dresses like Carol's. "You're not pretty like Carol," she mused, in frowning appraisal

of deep-set eyes, dark brows, dusky hair. "You're not pretty at all——"

She lay on her narrow bed staring at the square of night framed by her small window. Though this day had been as long as a week of days put together, she did not feel sleepy. She did not want to go to sleep. She wanted to sort over her jumbled impressions, sorry though some of them were—the new cousins, Aunt Maddy, Uncle Nicholas, Miss Amy. Yet she found herself thinking most of Miss Amy. Miss Amy had come here a stranger, different—oh, *very* different from Aunt Maddy. And she had made a place for herself among them all. She had helped with the work. Janny thought of the little pile of stockings waiting on Miss Amy's table. Miss Amy had made them "need" her. She had said she was happy, now.

But Janny drew a long sigh. The way for her looked hard, uncertain. She could not imagine any of them needing *her*. She thought of Carol's scornful words as she had overheard them. She turned her burning face into her pillow.

CHAPTER VIII

POOR KEVIN

AT HALF-PAST two of an afternoon four weeks later Janny turned into the street from the Newton High School. She walked alone among all the girls who came pouring out from the wide doorway of the school, moving in little groups, talking, linking arms, hailing classmates. Now and then a girl nodded to her, others looked curiously at the old ulster coat and the hat wreathed with buttercups, but except for that no one noticed her.

But to-day Janny was not lonely—not conscious as she had been other days that she walked alone. To-day was different from those yesterdays!

She had been put into the Junior class with full credit.

She wanted to run. She wanted to get home quickly to tell some one about it. Any one. It was a triumph to Janny, a triumph over the bewilderment that had engulfed her these wearisome weeks in the new school.

To Janny, who had known only Doctor John's teaching in the little school at Painted Post, where the regulations always had to take second place to every other demand of the community, the Newton High School had seemed like a big machine worked by gongs. Gongs rang through the endless corridors, boys and

girls were shuttled from room to room, gongs resounded again, silence followed. There were so many gongs and so many corridors and so many boys and girls and so many teachers and so many classrooms that Janny knew she would never feel like anything but a ball driven here and there without knowing why. There had been many questions to answer, and the answers were written on cards, and the cards filed in a huge filing case by a Miss Watkins, an efficient gray-haired woman with alarming spectacles. This same alarming person had given Janny examinations. Oh, it had all been very terrible!

But to-day Miss Watkins had told her she could go into the Junior study room. Miss Watkins had actually smiled, a human smile that warmed the Oxford eyeglasses. "Your papers are very good, Miss Bartley, especially the Latin paper. I do not think you will have any difficulty keeping up with the Junior work." She had given Janny a note to take to "Miss Pennington." When Janny looked blank she had explained that Miss Pennington was in charge of the Junior girls' study room on the third floor. "You are rather a lost little girl, are you not?" She had smiled again and patted Janny's hand with the tips of her efficient fingers. Then Janny had threaded the labyrinth of corridors, found the Junior girls' study room and timidly presented her credentials to Miss Pennington.

Miss Watkins had called her "a lost little girl." Truly she had lived these interminable weeks at her

uncle's house lost in a cloud of bewilderment, hurt, overwhelming loneliness.

There had been so much she could not understand. There was Carol's studied indifference to her that shut her always on the outside of the things that belonged to Carol, Charlie's easy friendliness which she knew as too casual to mean kindliness, Aunt Maddy's cold tolerance, at unguarded moments resentful, as if Aunt Maddy wanted her to know *she* had not brought her here. There was Uncle Nicholas, who seemed to have forgotten now that she had not always lived with them, forgotten, too, those "advantages" he had spoken of to Doctor John and Mother Faire and which she was to share with Carol.

There was Carol's pretty room, gay with the color of girlish belongings, into which lonely Janny was never invited. There was Aunt Maddy's room, quiet and shaded, faintly odorous of medicines and rubbing oils, past the door of which Janny involuntarily tiptoed.

And no one mentioned her father's name. Janny realized now how much she had built her brave anticipations on that. Once when she had spoken of her father Aunt Maddy had silenced her quickly. "You must not speak of your father here, Janice." She had not explained why, had ignored the pain on Janny's face. She had said it nervously, in a final tone.

As the days passed, she came to feel herself an outsider, sharing the life under her uncle's roof as little as though she were still in Painted Post; Carol and Aunt Maddy had managed to build a barrier between

her and it, as actual a thing as though it stood of stone and mortar.

At first the distractions of her new surroundings had held these painful perplexities back in Janny's mind. There was the unaccustomed luxury of her uncle's home, the wide, silent rooms, the deep-piled rugs, the brilliant lights, switched on by the mere pressing of a thumb to glow under rose and amber shades, there were the city streets crowded with strange faces, motors, street cars, the noises beating ceaselessly on her ears. There was the shopping with Miss Amy, breath-taking for the time because the shopping was for her and because the stores were so exciting with their counters piled high with alluring wares and their aisles crowded with shoppers. There had been one hour of restored self-confidence when she hung in her old wardrobe the two dresses Miss Amy made for her.

But, inevitably, the novelty of the new life wore off, leaving room for the bewilderment and the hurt and the loneliness. She vaguely felt the luxury of her uncle's house as only a shell beneath which were inharmonies that jarred in the ceaseless bantering of the young people, in Celia's grumblings, Kevin's scowling, Aunt Maddy's complaining, even in Uncle Nicholas' profound absorption that must be worry. Something that had lived in Doctor John's cabin was lacking in this home, where money had spread comfort and beauty with so lavish a hand. Sometimes when after dinner the family scattered, the young people to their separate interests, Uncle Nicholas to his study, Janny suffered

an overwhelming longing for the little home in Painted Post, to sit just one evening again with Doctor John and Mother Faire, the lamp on the table lit, the gray friendly shadows hovering beyond its circle of light, the isinglass eyes of the stove winking brightly, Toby— Night after night tears had soaked her pillow, yet had not eased the ache in her heart.

But for Miss Amy and the refuge of school, her young spirit must have broken under its trial. There were books, too. No one said she might not read them and no one else wanted to read them, so often she stole into her uncle's study, selected a book from the shelves and hid herself in the deep bay window.

She had Doctor John's letters, which came once a week with faithful regularity and which she read and reread until they were ragged with handling. They were cheerful letters, full of all the inconsequential happenings at Painted Post, of the little things he and Mother Faire were doing. They were wise letters, for not in one of them did he ask Janny if she were homesick. And though Janny cried over the letters, she answered them bravely.

Now as she walked homeward under the yellowing maples she felt a lift of that burden she had carried, a surge of youthful courage. She had a definite place in school. She belonged to it. And she would find a "place" in her uncle's home, just as Cousin Amy had said she would. She would tell them her news at dinner, when the family was together, and they would

feel with her that she had achieved something, they would be glad.

The house was very quiet when she entered. She went straight to Miss Amy's room. But Miss Amy was not there. Celia was cleaning the bathroom. She told Janny that Miss Amy had gone down-town. "Miss Ba'tley" was out, too. No, Carol and Charlie had not come home yet. Maybe Kevin was somewhere around. Celia had heard him in the kitchen a few moments before.

Janny had not thought of sharing her triumph with Kevin. But Kevin would be better than no one to hear her news. She went downstairs and out to the barn. She boldly pushed the door open.

Kevin was sitting on his stool as she had found him before. But now his arms were flung out across the table, his head dropped dejectedly into them. "Why, he's crying," Janny thought. "Kevin!" she called, stopping irresolute.

He threw his head up and faced her. "What 'ya want?" he growled, scowling angrily at her.

At the despair written on the boy's face, Janny forgot why she had sought him out. "What's the matter, Kevin?" she pressed, uncertainly.

"Nothing." Kevin turned away. "Nothing that's any one's affair but mine." But when Janny did not stir he added: "I flunked the Cicero quarterly again. That's all——"

"Oh, Kevin!" She did not know what more to say.

"I can't help it. I hate the old stuff. I'd quit school if Dad would let me."

"But you have to go to school," reminded Janny, practically.

"I could work and study nights—study what I want to, not a lot of trash—like Latin. I won't have Dad bawling me out and Charlie guying me all the time. I won't. I'll run away if Dad won't let me quit —I'll run away like your father did."

At that Janny's heart turned over. So her father had run away! That was why Carol had said to Charlie— "You know no one speaks of him." Why Aunt Maddy had acted so nervous—as if she were afraid Janny was going to open a door and let out a ghost. That was why Aunt Maddy did not want her here, to remind them of her father. They had closed their hearts to his memory. That was the barrier she had felt.

She felt her cheeks stinging with humiliation. But loyally she rebuked herself. Whatever wrong her father may have done, she would not judge him. He could not have been what they thought him—she knew that. Some day they must know it, too.

She had difficulty bringing herself to Kevin's need. She searched her troubled mind frantically for something she could say to him. *He* must not run away!

"I'm going into the Cicero class. They told me to-day that I could. I'm a Junior." But Kevin was not moved out of his despair by her news. Janny pressed on: "I can help you. Latin's awfully easy for me—

Doctor John taught it to me, you see. Please let me help you. We'll go over the translation together. Let's just do it for the rest of the term and then I know you'll pass." Her voice was pleading.

Kevin did not answer. Perhaps the ignominy of taking help from Janny was only a little less than the failure in the examination. He glowered darkly into space.

"It won't be any use. This is the third term I've taken it. I simply can't get the stuff——"

"Well, you can *try*!" Janny insisted. "I'll ask Cousin Amy if we may study in her room. You needn't tell a soul what we're doing. Say you will, Kevin—just until the next examination——"

"Oh, *well*——" Kevin rose abruptly. "Guess I haven't any choice. But I tell you I'm dumb in the stuff." Janny had to take this as Kevin's way of accepting her offer.

"Poor Kevin," she thought.

Her elation in her own success vanished. She could not tell the others that she'd been put in the Junior class, for that would make Kevin's failure the more conspicuous. She would not tell any one—now.

She heard Kevin and his father talking in the study. Kevin came out to dinner flushed and sulky. Uncle Nicholas was frowning and ate only a little and in a silence deeper than usual.

Miss Amy was pleased when Janny asked if she and Kevin might study in her room. "There—use the table." She cleared an end of it briskly. "I'll sit here

as quiet as a mouse. If I knew anything I might have been helping the boy—but goodness me, I can just about add two and two."

More than once as the lessons went forward Miss Amy looked up from her own work and nodded wisely at the two heads bent over the Latin books. She might not have known much more from the "books" than enough to add two and two, but behind her twinkling eyes was a store of homely wisdom learned from the hardest taskmaster in life—experience, and perhaps she was saying to herself that Janny was finding her place. She knew more about the heartache the girl had borne these days than Janny suspected; wisely enough, she had not fed Janny's self-pity by her sympathy or by the righteous indignation she had felt more than once. And wisely now, she said no more of her thought to Janny than that it was "nice she could help poor Kevin."

Of course Janny was glad she could help Kevin. But she'd rather, much rather, it were Charlie, or better still, Carol.

CHAPTER IX

PEACOCKS AND PEARLS

JANNY had been in the Junior class a week when at the luncheon hour one of the girls hailed her with friendly gusto.

"Wait a minute. Let me go up to lunch with you!"

Janny could not control the flush of pleasure that mounted to her face. She had longed so much for some one to say just that. She had taken her new seat in the Junior study room unhailed, had gone to and from classes and to and from the school alone as before.

She knew the girl was Mary Payne. Mary sat a few desks away from her and she had heard the other girls call her Mary.

"They've made you a Junior, haven't they? You're Kevin Bartley's cousin, aren't you? My brother Garrett knows Kevin. Isn't it hard breaking into a new school? I know I'd hate it."

Janny was glad Mary did not wait for her to answer. She thrilled to the feeling of Mary's hand through her arm, of walking into the crowded cafeteria with it there for the other girls to see. At once some girls crowded around them and their careless talk included her as well as Mary.

For sheer happiness she could not eat any luncheon. She tried to join the chatter, steadying the excitement she felt that these others might not see it. She called

the other girls at their little table "Mabel" and "Grace" as Mary did and they called her "Janny" and asked her where she'd come from and if it wasn't hard getting broken in to a new school.

They talked of school affairs and Janny listened with bright eyes. Some day she would talk as they did, for these affairs were hers, now, as much as theirs.

Afterwards, back in their study room, she covertly studied Mary Payne's face. She liked Mary's straight nose and chin and the way her lips met in a firm line. "She isn't pretty," she calculated, for now she judged all girls by the standard of Carol's prettiness and few could measure to that. "But she's nice-looking." Mary's eyelashes were long and black and shadowed her cheek now as she bent to her book but, when she suddenly lifted her face, perhaps feeling Janny's gaze on her, and smiled at Janny, her eyes were so blue in contrast to the black lashes as to startle Janny.

Janny smiled back shyly. "I'm going to like her a lot," she said to herself.

When school was dismissed Janny found Mary waiting for her outside. "I go your way," Mary explained simply. She locked arms with Janny. Another girl walked with them for a block or two. All at once life seemed very bright to Janny.

Within a short time she and Mary Payne were close friends, walking home from school together, sharing bits of school gossip, talking over the ups and downs of their school work. Mary knew all about Painted Post and Doctor John and Mother Faire and Janny

knew that Mary's mother was a widow and was in "business."

"She sells clothes—second-hand clothes," Mary explained. "All the rich women bring her their things when they're tired of them and she sells them to the women from the factory district. Some people look down on us, but anyway Mother's kept Garr and me in school and that's a lot. When I graduate I'm going to study to be a nurse and then she can give up the old shop."

Janny never had heard of such a "business." When one afternoon later Mary begged Janny to stop home with her for just a little while she agreed eagerly, partly from a hunger for young companionship, partly from curiosity to see the second-hand dress shop.

Midway of the block of a side street Mary stopped with a brief "Here we are. This is where I live."

Janny saw a small weather-beaten house sadly in need of paint and new shingles and porch supports, elbowed on either side by newer houses which towered over its shabbiness as much as to sniff: "You must go." And the little house flung back its answer in bright yellow curtains at its front windows.

Only an inconspicuous sign in one of the windows, on which was printed "Dresses," proclaimed the house as a place of "business."

Mary saw Janny's involuntary scrutiny. "It's an awful-looking house but the rent is small and there isn't much work in it and that's what Mother has to consider, you see. There's a yard in back and a tree where

Mother can sew in the summer and keep cool. We'll go in the back door. Mother's always in the kitchen when she isn't with customers." Mary turned into the alley-way between the little gray house and its haughty neighbor. She walked ahead of Janny, her chin up.

Mary's mother was sitting in an old rocking-chair in the kitchen, sewing. She sprang up eagerly at the girls' entrance. Janny's immediate impression was that Mrs. Payne looked like the house. She was thin, her shoulders did not straighten as she rose from her work, her hair hung in untidy wisps about her ears, a great many needles and pins were stuck precariously into the waist of her dress, the material of which was covered with ends of thread and ravellings. But her tired eyes kindled at Mary's coming. She greeted Janny warmly, too. "So this is the new girl at school. Mary's told us about you. There's some cocoa hot there, Mary, and some fresh cookies in the jar. The children are always hungry when they get home from school and I expect maybe you are, too, Janny. Sit right down there at the table."

The table was littered with sewing. In its centre a great cat slept lazily. Janny seized him and hugged him while Mary cleared a space for their cups. Plainly this room was the living room for the Paynes as well as kitchen. It was a wide room and through one of its windows Janny glimpsed the yard where Mrs. Payne could work in the summer and keep cool. It did not seem much of a yard to Janny, accustomed to the clearings at Painted Post, to the more spacious grounds

around the house on Maple Avenue. It was shut in by a battered fence and the tree, bare now, was a sorry thing.

Big as it was, the room looked cluttered. There was a hodge-podge of everything, as if before some storm Mrs. Payne had hurried all the family belongings into these four walls for safety, some books, a pretentious desk, plush-upholstered rocking-chairs and wooden kitchen chairs all mixed together. In a golden-oak cabinet were crowded the silver and hand-painted china worthy in Mrs. Payne's eyes to be kept behind glass, and on top two tall vases, an ormolu clock that was not going and a Big Ben that was. In a corner stood the form used by Mrs. Payne in refitting, its nakedness partially covered now by an old shawl. On the walls hung a motley collection of pictures, a distressing chromo labelled in large letters "The Orphan's Prayer," a painting of winter hills bleak against a flaming sunset, innumerable calendars and pages from fashion books fastened in place with thumb-tacks. The room did not seem to belong to Mary, the Mary Janny knew in school, deliberate in thought and speech, scrupulously neat in dress. Janny did not like it. She thought she did not like Mary's mother. She was ashamed of thinking it, for Mrs. Payne was so anxious to make her feel at home.

"Any dresses come in to-day, Mother?" Mary asked when she had emptied her cocoa cup.

Mrs. Payne said that "some one" had brought in three—two evening dresses in the lot. Mary's face

brightened. "May we put them on, Mother?" Mary explained then to Janny that she liked to put on the different dresses—make a sort of a game of it. "You may put one on. They're always clean. Mother won't take anything that isn't clean."

She led Janny into the front rooms of the house. These had once been the double parlors, but now all that was left of those days of grace were the tarnished, fly-specked, unused gas jets hanging from the ceilings, the faded wall paper and carpet and a long pier glass between the front windows. Built-in cupboards heavy with the scent of camphor were ranged along the walls; boxes of every size were piled wherever there was room for them.

"They're in that box there on that chair," pointed Mrs. Payne. "If the bell rings you must skedaddle to the kitchen."

Janny was watching Mary in mute astonishment. Of course, she too, in Mother Faire's clothes, had played often this game of "lady"—what girl hadn't?—but to play it now, Juniors in High School, and Mary, of all girls! Mary had pounced on the box, was tearing away the folds of tissue paper with the haste of hunger. "Oh, Jan, look!" She held up a blue gossamery thing, not much more than a wisp of cloth in her hands. Her voice was high-pitched. "Isn't this good enough to eat?" She hung it over one arm and reached again into the box. "And see this! You must put this one on, Jan. It looks like you." She thrust into Janny's hands a silky garment of flame color.

Janny found herself holding her breath. The material softened to almost nothing under her touch. It couldn't be a dress!

"Can we really put them on?" she asked, doubtfully.

Mary laughed. "Of course." Already Mary was stripping off her school dress.

But Janny could not move for watching Mary. Some inner fire transformed the girl's serious face, her hands were working feverishly with fastenings as if her blood were racing through her body. There was a toss to her head; the sleek hair was ruffled.

"I'll find some slippers and some scarfs," Mary was saying in that tight, excited voice. She darted to a corner, returned with an armful of slippers, velvet, satin, silver. From another box she took scarfs that hung like a rainbow from her fingers.

"Why—what's the matter, Janny?" She regarded Janny in astonishment. "Why don't you put your dress on?"

Janny laughed a little shakily. She began unfastening her own dress. Mary helped her put on the flame-colored garment. It slipped down upon her shoulders with a strange, cool, silky feeling.

"Oh, you're gorgeous!" Mary exclaimed, ecstatically. "Look at yourself, now, Janice Bartley, and deny that you're gorgeous!" She turned Janny toward the long mirror.

Having belonged to a woman more developed than Janny, the dress hung loosely from her girlish shoul-

ders, almost touched the floor. But Janny smiled back at the reflection. "It *is* gorgeous," she admitted. She studied that other girl in the tarnished frame. "Why, I'm almost pretty!"

"Pretty—*almost*! You're a goose—a blind goose. Here—put on the slippers. We'll dance. Here—take this silver scarf. I adore feeling a scarf trailing around me."

Mary threw the silver scarf across Janny's shoulders. Then she ran to an old phonograph in a corner and started it playing. She danced back to Janny, her body swaying to the rhythm of the music.

The brightness faded a little from Janny's face. "I can't dance," she admitted, dolefully.

"You *can't*! Well, then I shall teach you. See—follow me!" Mary caught Janny's hands, led her into the centre of the room.

For a half-hour the lesson lasted. Mary patiently guided her pupil to and fro, backward and forward. "One. Two. One. Two. Oh, no—*that* foot, Jan. See—that's it— You're a wonder. There—now, get the rhythm—easy—just let me lead you. One. Two. One. Two. You ought to know how stiff some girls are."

Now and then Mrs. Payne came to the doorway to watch them, her sewing in her hands, her head nodding to the beat of the music, her tired eyes kindling.

At last, breathless, Mary declared the lesson over. "You'll learn in no time, Janny. You're a natural dancer. You feel it—inside. It's just getting confi-

dence. Well, I suppose we've got to take the things off." And Mary drew a long sigh.

Now her hands moved slowly, reluctantly, as she took off the dress. Her eyes were brooding.

"I wonder what it'd feel like to always wear clothes like that—to know that you *belonged* to them." She saw Janny's eyes on her in surprise. "Oh, it isn't just that they're pretty—it's what they mean. When I have them on I feel a million miles away from—*that* Mary Payne." And she gave the slightest shrug of her shoulders toward the kitchen.

She sat on the edge of a chair, the blue garment across her knees. Her slender body in its untrimmed cotton undergarment was braced stiffly in defiance of some inner feeling. She regarded Janny with frowning eyes. "Don't think I'm ashamed of Mother or of being poor! I think Mother's wonderful. She looks a sight most of the time but that's because she won't ever think of herself—she just thinks of Garr and me. But she didn't always look like that. She was pretty, Janny. Awfully pretty." Mary said it tragically, stopped on the words a moment so that Janny, too, felt the tragedy of that prettiness Mrs. Payne had had and lost, felt ashamed again that she had thought she didn't like Mrs. Payne.

Mary went on, her lips set in a straight line. "I was horrid when I was a kid. I used to make all kinds of a fuss when I had to wash dishes and sometimes I'd sneak out to play and leave them. And I hated not having things—even then. Until my mother's cousin

stopped in to visit us once. That was three years ago. We'd never seen her. I knew Mother wasn't very glad to see her but I didn't know why until afterwards. Margaret was always talking to Mother about things they had done before Mother married. And after Margaret had gone I heard Mother crying. I never had known her to cry like it before and it frightened me. And, Janny, she was holding some slippers, pretty brocaded slippers. I never had seen them. She told me they'd been hers. I couldn't believe it—they were so cute, with little pointed toes and high heels. They didn't look like her. And she saw that I couldn't believe it. So she told me when she had worn them. She sat there with the slippers in her hand and the tears pouring down her cheeks. And then I saw Mother as she had been before she had to worry over money and go without things and work—for Garr and me. I asked her if I might have the slippers—just to keep—and she gave them to me. I wouldn't wear them—ever; they mean too much to me. Janny, I grew up that night I found Mother with those pretty slippers. I saw things—understood things. I guess that's the way it comes to a girl sometimes. Now when I hear the girls whispering about Mother's business, when they want me to do things I can't afford to do, I just remember those slippers up in my bureau drawer and I laugh! I'd be ashamed to care!"

There was a hint of a sob now in Mary's voice but her eyes were dry. She folded the blue garment and

put it carefully back into the box. Then she straightened. The "game" was over.

"That's why I'm going to be a nurse. I hate the thought of it, just *hate* it, but it's Mother's idea—she wants me to. She was going to be one—and then she got married. I really want—shriek now, Janny—I want to be an actress. I know I could if I had the chance to study a little. There's an actress lives here summers, acts in stock at the Empire. She buys clothes here and she gives Mother and me tickets. I have learned lots of the parts and I know I could do them. But there's no use. I can put on a hundred of these duds and pretend but nevertheless I'm Mary Payne, going to be a nurse, just the same. It's silly to think of the other—I wouldn't earn much money for ages. Mrs. Crockett said so. And Garr and I have agreed to one thing and that is that we're going to get to earning money as fast as we can so that maybe Mother can still take things easy and have some fun—wear pretty slippers again. I've never told a soul all this so you must keep it a secret, Janny," Mary ended.

Janny felt shy before the revelation of Mary's confidence. She could not comprehend at once the meaning of all that Mary had told her, but it was to come to her during their growing friendship and explain many things. Its immediate effect upon her was to check what she would like to tell Mary. She would like to tell Mary that she, too, loved the feel of the flame-colored dress because it made her some one "different" from the Janice Bartley who wasn't wholly happy at

her uncle's house; she would like to tell Mary of the hurt she carried always in her heart for her father, whose name might not be mentioned before these people who were his own people, but she could not tell her all this, for in the face of what Mary had revealed, such complaining seemed childish. She wanted to be as brave as Mary.

She did tell Mary that she thought she looked much nicer in her plain school dress than in the blue; in other words, that she was quite content with the Mary Payne of the little weather-beaten house with the defying yellow curtains. Really there was something in Mary's spirit *like* those yellow curtains!

But something of the "pretend game" lingered with Janny as she went homeward. The rhythm of the dancing tune echoed in her ears. She still felt the cool silkiness of the unaccustomed garment against her skin. Dry leaves were blowing across the lawns, swirling around the trunks of the trees, a silent laughter in their circling and twisting and soft crackling. The wind was blowing white fluffs of cloud across the sky. Janny felt her old urge to run in the wind, to be the wind. She had hard ado to walk soberly.

At times she wondered if she ought to tell Aunt Maddy that she had a chum at school. Aunt Maddy had warned her repeatedly that she must choose her acquaintances carefully; for some reason Aunt Maddy seemed to doubt that she would do so. And Carol had said in her hearing that no "nice" girls went to the High. Now she decided she would tell them about

Mary, how very nice Mary was, that Mrs. Payne's business was excusable in that it kept Garr and Mary in school. Even Aunt Maddy must think Mrs. Payne wonderful. She would tell them at dinner. Perhaps she might even tell of the fun of playing make-believe in the party dresses, like two children, and of the dancing lesson.

But at dinner she felt shy, awkward, again conscious of having no place in the little circle. Carol was not there. Mrs. Bartley explained to her father that Carol was going out to a supper party and to the theatre afterwards. Nicholas Bartley frowned at that. "I had tickets for the concert to-night. Carol said that she would go with me."

"But that was before she had this invitation," Mrs. Bartley reminded him, impatiently.

Nicholas Bartley turned to Charlie. "Don't ask me to go, Dad," Charlie laughed. "I've got a date."

Janny saw Kevin lift his head quickly, glance at his father with a look of appeal in his eyes which Nicholas Bartley refused to see.

"I have said, Son, that you cannot go out until your marks are better." He turned to Janny. "Will you go with me, Janice?"

Janny wanted to beg him to take Kevin. She could not forget that flash of asking in Kevin's eyes. But she said that she would go. "I'd love it." A concert—she had never been to one!

Then Carol came into the room. She wore a rose-hued dress, a band of the same color around her fair

hair. Her face was so radiantly pretty that Janny drew a quick breath of delight. A string of pearls hung about her slender throat. An evening coat over her arm, she sat down on the edge of a chair, all expectancy for her evening's fun.

"Don't I look nice, Dad?" she asked, coaxingly.

Nicholas Bartley regarded her gravely. Janny wondered why he did not tell her at once how pretty she looked. At last he asked heavily: "Where did you get those pearls, Carol? They are not your mother's——"

There was the barest moment of hesitation before Carol answered. Janny heard Charlie next to her draw an audible breath.

"They are Joe Merry's, Dad. She's letting me wear them to-night."

"Haven't you enough gewgaws, Carol, without borrowing from your friends? I do not want you to wear them. You may lose them. I don't like the idea of it, anyway."

"Dad, I have to wear them! Every one's wearing pearls now——" Carol pleaded, her pretty face distorted by a pout.

"Really, Nicholas, you are unreasonable. Carol and Joe are such close friends—like sisters; I can't see the harm."

"I said I did not want her to wear them." Nicholas Bartley's heavy brows met in a frown.

Carol's face flushed. "Anyway, I can wear them, Dad. They are not Joe's. I fibbed about that. I bought them myself. It's going to be yours and Mamma's

Christmas present to me. But I needed them now. I couldn't wait until Christmas."

A heavy silence hung on the circle. At one and the same time Janny was conscious of Miss Amy's bent face, as troubled as if she herself had fibbed, of Celia standing listening in the doorway, of Aunt Maddy's increasing pallor, of Charlie's involuntary: "Oh, say, Dad——" She did not dare look at poor pretty Carol. Or Uncle Nicholas. She found herself unaccountably trembling.

Nicholas Bartley got up abruptly and left the room. They heard the door of his study close behind him. But in his going Janny had caught, against her will, a fleeting glimpse of his furrowed, tired face. All at once she felt very, very sorry for him. Carol must feel sorry, too. Carol must follow him, tell him.

But Carol did not follow him. She was straightening her pretty dress with little jerks at the shoulders, as if her fine feathers had been inconsiderably ruffled. She was saying in a scolding voice that "Dad was impossible."

"Have you your key in your bag?" Aunt Maddy asked quietly. Aunt Maddy considered the key more important than the matter of the pearls. "You will come home directly after the theatre?"

The others were calmly finishing their dinner. Presently Carol flitted away, Charlie disappeared to make ready for his "date." Kevin slouched off to his own room. Cousin Amy went out to help Celia. Of them all plainly Janny was the most disturbed.

It was more than Carol's indifference to her father's hurt; an inner sensibility had been shocked. That Carol could so calmly buy her own Christmas present! Back in Painted Post no one knew *anything* about their gifts until the glad day came. A mystery glorified the smallest, cheapest trifle, made it beautifully significant. Whatever the package she found under her Christmas tree tagged in Doctor John's handwriting, she loved it as much before she opened it as afterwards. She'd *hate* to go and buy her own Christmas present!

Thinking of Carol and the pearls, Janny forgot the concert. She was startled when she heard her Uncle Nicholas calling her name. "Are you ready, Janny?"

He stood in the hall, his coat over his arm. Except for that tightening of his brows he seemed his precise, collected self.

"We will walk down. It is a pleasant evening."

CHAPTER X

"YOU'RE A FUNNY KID"

JANNY measured her step to her uncle's. Now and then she glanced furtively at his bent face, wondering if he were aware that she was with him. She decided he must have forgotten.

For a little way she thought about Carol, who couldn't be having a good time at her supper party, and about Kevin, who had wanted to come to the concert. Then, as the beauty of the night stole over her, she forgot her worries. The wind had died down. The air was smoothly cold against her face. The sky was studded with stars. They looked like millions of yellow lamps hung from a blue-black canopy. She fancied that she could see them swinging gently from invisible threads. Looking at the stars, feeling the night, hearing its sounds, muted and occasional, Janny felt all at once free from perplexities. The things that had bothered her were such little things compared to the vastness of the night! They'd straighten out. To-morrow Carol would tell her father how sorry she was and maybe Kevin could go to the next concert. Of course he could. He really was working hard at Cicero. But oh, how he hated it!

She walked with her face lifted a little. Now she had almost forgotten her uncle! She was thinking that maybe Doctor John was looking at these same stars.

It made her seem closer to him. Often when the night was clear he took his pipe and walked out of doors. It was probably very cold now in Painted Post. He'd have on his old sheepskin coat and his ragged cap——

"Here we are," said her Uncle Nicholas abruptly.

The wide entrance of the new City Hall was ablaze with lights. People were climbing the imposing steps in a steady stream. This concert marked a goal in the cultural development of Newton, and its citizens recognized it as such. They entered consciously, importantly, nodding to one another. Janny heard a man say to her uncle: "Fine, isn't it—that we have a hall now where we can hear a good orchestra? We've been a long time getting it." And he said it as if he and Uncle Nicholas had built it. Janny began to feel important, excited.

The auditorium was on the first floor of the building. Janny was awed by its size and appointments, its gilded proscenium arch, the wide stage, the ornate chandeliers on the side walls, a-twinkle with lights, the gaudily frescoed gallery. She followed her uncle down one of the aisles, heard him salute this person and that, be saluted in turn. She took the seat next to her uncle but she sat forward on its edge, her head turning from one side to the other lest she miss anything.

When the players began to tune their instruments Janny thought it like the clamor of birds in the early morning. As the leader lifted his baton with a sweep and the concerted tones of the different instruments blended into the allegro movement of a Brahms' symphony, she wanted to cry without knowing why; to her

the swelling harmonies combined every sensation she ever had experienced into one great ecstasy. She strained forward to the music, her hands locked tight together, her lips parted. She wanted it to last forever. She wanted it so much that when, with a crash of cymbals and a wail of strings, the first number ended, she turned to her uncle and wailed: "Is that all they're going to play?"

Her uncle nodded to the programme she held crushed in one hand. She had forgotten it. She looked at it. However, it did not mean much more to her than that the orchestra *would* play again, several times again. She settled back contentedly. Now she was glad that her uncle did not want to talk; she would sit very still with the music echoing in her ears until they made more music.

Audibly sighing with delight after one number, she suddenly became aware that the boy in the seat next to her was smiling at her. She blushed but she smiled back frankly.

"Do you like it so much?" he asked.

"Don't you?" she retorted, astonished.

"I'll say I do," he answered promptly. "It's great."

"Does it make you feel all sort of trembly inside?" Janny queried so solemnly that he laughed. But he admitted that it did make him feel queer.

Janny nodded, then. "That's it. That's the way it makes me feel. Next time they play I'm going to shut my eyes and pretend there isn't a soul here but me—that I'm alone, out in the night, and that the music comes

with the wind." She was so intent upon her experiment that she did not notice the amazed expression on the boy's face. She sat back, shut her eyes, waited.

When she opened them she turned at once to her neighbor. "It was glorious," she said softly. "It just lifted me up and up——" Suddenly she could not find words to describe her ecstasy. She did not know that the starriness of her eyes spoke for her.

"You're a funny kid," the boy said, smiling. But there was no ridicule in his voice, rather a wistfulness as if she had something he wished he had. It was a wistfulness such as she had seen flash in Kevin's eyes that moment at dinner. The thought brought her sharply back to a realization of where she was, that she was in the auditorium of the new City Hall with her Uncle Nicholas and, more, that she was talking to a total stranger—a thing that was not done in Newton, Aunt Maddy had warned her over and over. Furthermore, she had talked in a silly way; he had said that she was a funny kid. She wondered if her uncle had heard her. She writhed inwardly at her boldness. Now she kept her face turned carefully from her neighbor. If her uncle were displeased it would add another burden to his concern, and surely his burden was heavy enough, as it was.

Presently the boy addressed her averted face. "Aren't you Janny Bartley? I'm Garrett Payne—Mary's brother. I've seen you with her in school. Mary told me about you—your coming here to live with your uncle. I know Kevin—in school, of course," he added.

Janny wheeled toward him. "Then you're *not* a stranger," she said, relief mingling with delight on her face. She did not care that Garrett for the moment looked puzzled. "I might have known you were Mary's brother. You look like her." He had Mary's straight nose and the same firm chin.

"I do odd jobs here at the Hall and they give me tickets to things. We take turns coming. I wanted Mary to come to-night but she wouldn't—said it was my turn and I had to come. She'll think that it's a great joke, my sitting next to you and getting acquainted."

They chatted together like old friends until the director took up his baton for the last number. Though now she could not get back into her former ecstasy of feeling, Janny did not care. She did not even think of the music. She was thinking how nice Garrett was and how nice that she had met him in this way. She had imagined Mary's brother a rather alarming person, and he wasn't at all.

On the way home she would tell Uncle Nicholas about Mary and her mother and that this boy to whom she had talked was Mary's brother.

But on the homeward way Uncle Nicholas fell again into an absorption of thought which excluded her. "He *is* thinking of Carol." She sighed. She wished she could say something to her uncle that would comfort him. If she were Doctor John she'd know just what to say.

Oddly, just then there flashed to her mind the evening Peter Ostrander and Job Mimmack, the trapper,

had come to Doctor John's cabin with little Davy Mimmack. Peter Ostrander had caught Davy stealing a string of hard sausage from the Trading Post. Janny remembered the faces of the three, Peter Ostrander's, red and blustering, Davy's sullen and ashamed, poor Job Mimmack's plainly frightened. Peter Ostrander wanted the "law" on the boy; "he's a bad one," he'd said, and the father had protested only feebly. But Doctor John had shaken his head on the "law." Davy wasn't as bad as that. He had questioned Davy and Davy had admitted that some of the older boys had put him up to it—to annoy Peter Ostrander. Davy wouldn't tell their names, though. Finally Doctor John had suggested that Davy, as a punishment, should wear the string of sausages about his neck for one day. Peter Ostrander hadn't thought much of that as a punishment but he'd agreed. Folks usually in the end agreed with Doctor John. Janny remembered how Davy had looked in school with the ridiculous string of sausages around his neck, how he had gone about with averted eyes and had slunk away from the children's laughter. And then she remembered how he had looked when the day was over, his head up and his eyes straightforward. Though pearls were a long way from sausages, Carol must feel, whenever she wore them, just as Davy had with the sausages on his neck——

"Uncle Nicholas," she said so suddenly that it startled herself. "Uncle Nicholas, I know Carol's going to hate those pearls every time she wears them now. Every time she puts them on she's going to put that

—that fib she told you—around her neck. Don't you think that is a punishment?"

She saw her uncle turn and look at her sharply. But he did not answer her. "I suppose he's angry at me for interfering," she thought, regretting her impulse. "Probably he thinks it's none of my business."

But, entering the hall of the house, Nicholas Bartley put his hand on her shoulder. "Are you tired? Won't you come in and sit with me a little while?" He turned to his study door.

Janny struggled to hide her astonishment. Obediently she sat down in the chair where she imagined Aunt Maddy sat the rare times she sat in the study. Uncle Nicholas sat down at his desk.

"Did you like the concert, my dear?" he asked.

"Oh, yes——"

"I'm glad of that."

Then Uncle Nicholas did not say anything more. He was frowning down at the neat desk pad before him, making little lines back and forth with the paper knife. Janny waited, wondering. Finally he spoke again.

"Are you happy here, child?"

Janny said "Yes, Uncle Nicholas." She could not have told him anything else, just then. Anyway, in school and with Mary she *was* happy, now—almost wholly happy.

He looked plainly relieved. "I'm glad of that," he said again and appeared to dismiss that thought. He continued, however, to trace the little lines on the blotter, his hand working nervously back and forth.

Watching him, Janny thought how old and tired he looked. Probably he had not felt the lift of the music, as she had. When, finally, he glanced up and smiled at her, he smiled only with his lips and as if it was not easy.

"I've been thinking of Carol all evening. I didn't know what I ought to do about it. It hurt me. But I think I shall tell her she must wear those pearls all the time. I don't think she will like that. I hadn't thought of that until you spoke of it. You're an odd child, Janice." And he smiled again, the smile that he seemed to turn on and off mechanically and that went no deeper than his lips.

Janny had a sudden impulse to kiss her uncle, but when he said, "Run off, now, to bed," she left him with a bare good-night.

She thought of him as she undressed. She wondered how long he would sit down there alone. He was almost always alone. And he really *did* care whether or not she was happy here. She wished she had kissed him.

She heard the front door open, heard Carol calling good-night to some one outside, heard the answering good-nights. She listened for Carol's footsteps on the stairs. If she didn't hear them that meant Carol had gone in to her father, perhaps had her arms around his neck, telling him how sorry she was about the pearls——

But she heard Carol's light step running up the stairs, heard her call softly at her mother's door: "Awake, Mamma? Oh, I had the best time——"

CHAPTER XI

PLANS IN THE MAKING

THE days grew sharply cold with occasional flurries of snow. Charlie, staring out of the window one morning, remarked that there'd be skating soon, "if this weather keeps up."

"Oh, I hope so," cried Janny so enthusiastically that the others looked at her inquiringly. "I love to skate," she explained. "Doctor John taught me when I was little. We skated on the river when there wasn't too much snow." Then, feeling Carol's frown upon her, she stopped abruptly, a little resentful. In Aunt Maddy's absence Carol must frown on any allusion to Painted Post!

Carol was wearing the pearls. Her father had decreed she must wear them until Christmas. For the first few weeks she had worn them with an "I don't care" air. But of late she had lost that. Janny noticed that she was not talking so much about the pretty things the other girls had.

Janny had suffered keen apprehension lest Carol find out that it was she who unintentionally had put the idea of the punishment into her father's head. She had dreaded what it might bring down upon her. But outwardly at least Carol made no sign that she knew. Her attitude toward Janny continued the same, a carefully directed indifference.

Janny went down to the little pond each day to test the ice. She got out her skates, a Christmas gift from Doctor John two years ago, and lovingly examined their steel runners. She found the red tam Mother Faire had knit for her. She'd be all ready for the first ice.

She knew Carol was eager for the skating to come, Charlie, too. Charlie had talked about needing a new hockey stick. He'd directed his appeal to Kevin. "I spent all my allowance. Can't you give me enough to buy a new stick, Kev?" But Kevin had shaken his head. "I'm broke, too," he answered briefly.

"Bet you spent yours on a lot of little dolls," jeered Charlie.

"Well, that's my affair," retorted Kevin, scowling darkly. "You knew you wanted a new hockey stick—why didn't you save your money for it?"

Janny wondered if Charlie would let her give him some money. Her uncle gave her an allowance each week and she spent very little of it.

"How much are hockey sticks?" she asked timidly.

"Oh, all prices——" Charlie answered with such nonchalance that Janny did not say any more.

Later, when they were all skating on the pond, she would tell him that she wanted to learn to play hockey, too. Girls did play it—she'd heard Carol say they did. And then she'd tell him to get two new hockey sticks.

One morning she ran down to the pond before breakfast. The sun was not yet up over the roof tops. A thin blanket of snow sparkled in the frosty daylight.

Carefully she stepped on to the ice. It felt solid under her feet. She walked across the pond and back again, then ran exultingly to the house. Carol and Charlie and Kevin were at the breakfast table.

"It'll hold!" she cried. "I walked all the way across it!"

"What'll hold?" asked Charlie. Carol stared at her.

"Why—the pond. We can skate on it to-day. The ice is as smooth as glass." She waited for their rejoicing, eager to share it.

A short scornful laugh was Carol's only answer.

"Who'd skate on that little pond?" drawled Charlie.

Not even Kevin was interested. He picked up the schoolbooks at his place and sauntered out of the room.

"We skate down at the Meadowbrook Club," explained Charlie. "They flood the tennis courts—four of them—and it makes a ripping rink."

"It's private, of course," added Carol hastily.

Janny bent over her breakfast plate to hide the hurt in her face. Carol's shaft went home to its mark; if its words had not conveyed to Janny the full brunt of her meaning her tone effectually did.

However, that afternoon Janny donned the red tam and her sweater and skated on the pond. Overhead the sky was very clear. The bare branches of the willows threw a fantastic pattern of blue shadows over the ice. She skated to her heart's content—but it was a lonely heart; in spite of her determination to forget, she kept thinking of Carol and Charlie and their friends on the

"private" rink at the Meadowbrook Club—of Doctor John and the boys and girls in Painted Post, perhaps skating this very minute on the river. After a little she removed her skates and went soberly to her room.

In school every one was elated over the early skating. Janny discovered that Mary was an enthusiastic follower of the sport. Mary and Garrett and most of the boys and girls from the High School skated on the little lake in the park. Mary suggested that she join them there.

It did not occur to Janny to ask permission of her aunt to do this. No one paid any attention to her coming and going, anyway. She carried her skates to school the next day. The public park was only a few blocks from school.

The little lake was pleasantly sheltered by wooded slopes. Quite a number of young people were out on the ice. Every one seemed merry; girls they knew in school hailed Mary and Janny. Garrett was there and and came at once to them to help them put on their skates. Then he swung Janny out on to the ice.

When they had sped the length of the ice and back they stopped for breath. "Say, you're great!" Garrett exclaimed in frank admiration of Janny's skill. There was no one to stop her telling Garr and Mary that Doctor John had spent hours and hours patiently teaching her. In the shelter of a little cove she executed some of Doctor John's "figures" while Mary and Garr watched in wide-eyed approval.

"You could win the prize for fancy skating at the carnival. You could win it *easy*," Garr declared.

Afterwards, as they walked home together, eyes bright and cheeks glowing, Mary explained to Janny that the Recreation Board of the city held a carnival every winter on the park lake. "They give medals for races and fancy skating and all kinds of stunts. It's loads of fun. You must go in for the fancy skating. You're better than any one I've seen around here."

"I'd never dare——" cried Janny, knowing perfectly well in her excited heart that she *would* dare.

"It wouldn't be anything at all. Garr can put in your name when he puts in his own for the races. He wanted to race last year but he was working and he couldn't. But he can this winter. You see, Mother won't let him take a steady after-school job because it's his last year in High and she wants him to have a chance at the athletics. I'm glad he's getting the chance. He's wonderful in basketball—he's just as good a player as Charlie Bartley only he never could go out for practice before."

This language Mary talked, of basketball and carnivals, of school activities in general, was a strange tongue to Janny, but she was learning it quickly; she was finding in its enthusiasms an outlet for her own pent-up feelings. She knew that, with Mary and Garr behind her, she would "go in" for the fancy skating. It would be fun. If she won—and Mary's certainty that she would win fired her confidence—it would be

fun surprising every one at home. It would be such fun writing to Doctor John about it.

"Don't tell any one you're planning it," advised Mary. "We'll surprise the crowd at school. I'll get Mother to fix you something to wear. She has no end of stuff at home—things no one buys, you see. She can make over something. She's awfully clever and she'd love to do it. She likes you, Jan. You see, I don't take many girls home with me. Really you're the first real close friend I've had since I was a kid."

Janny's answer to that was an affectionate squeeze of Mary's arm. It was good to walk home with Mary through the early twilight, to exchange these confidences, to know that she was Mary's best friend—her first real friend.

She did not mind so much now that the chatter at her uncle's house kept her on the outside. She would not mind skating alone on the little pond, "practising" her figures, with only Celia to admire what Celia called her "shines," and to marvel that she did not go on her nose.

CHAPTER XII

CHRISTMAS

JANNY had faced Christmas with a dread like unto physical suffering.

It couldn't be Christmas as she knew the blessed day, with that suggestion of music in the air that wasn't music at all but simply a great gladness. To Painted Post Mother Faire had brought some of the customs of that little Massachusetts town where she had lived her girlhood, lighting the candles in the window on Christmas Eve to show the little Christ Child His way, trimming the cabin with fresh green, going to the woods to cut the tree—two trees, one for the schoolhouse and a little one for the corner of the cabin. On Christmas Eve they bundled to the ears, the young and old of Painted Post, and went out and sang carols under the stars, their noses pink with frost, their eyes bright with good will. They laughed a great deal as they sang and the Indians watched them and listened, their faces solemn with mysticism. Then every one, Indians and all, crowded into the schoolhouse, all sweet with the smell of pine, to get warm and to drink coffee and eat doughnuts and popcorn. Old Pop Warnick would play his fiddle and Job Mimmack his accordion and the little schoolhouse would fairly rock with merriment. On Christmas Day, after their own tree, Janny always helped Mother Faire cook the Christmas dinner, which,

of course, was better than any other dinner, for the strangest party, for to it Doctor John always invited what he called the "floating" population of Painted Post, the men who wouldn't have anything better than a bit of pork at the Grand Hotel if he hadn't invited them. And after dinner Doctor John held service in the schoolhouse and told the story of Christmas and what that story meant to the world. And Janny loved it anew each time he told it.

Oh, no, Christmas would not be like that here!

She found that there would be no tree. Aunt Maddy held them too mussy. None of the others seemed to mind. Charlie said they had outgrown all that sort of thing.

However, they had not outgrown talking of the presents they wanted to receive. Charlie wanted a new "tuck." Carol wanted an "overnight" bag, fitted with toilet articles.

"You don't want much," Kevin grunted.

"You've had your Christmas present—your pearls," Charlie reminded her, a tormenting twinkle in his eye.

"I hate them," flared Carol, flushing hotly.

Poor Janny flushed, too, as if her own neck had shared the burden of Carol's fib.

"What're you asking Santa Claus for, Coz?" Charlie addressed Janny.

"I? Oh, I don't know. A book—a book that will be all my own."

Charlie laughed uproariously at such a desire. Even Kevin laughed—shortly and derisively.

At the sacrifice of her beloved skating, the neglect of Kevin's Latin, Janny worked furiously at making gifts for Christmas. She knit a tie for Doctor John, sometimes jabbing the steel needles into her fingers because she could not see the stitch for tears. She hemstitched and initialed handkerchiefs for Aunt Maddy and Carol and Uncle Nicholas and the boys. She worked in Miss Amy's room, sitting across the table from Miss Amy, the green globe of the electric lamp making a warm circle of light around them. Laboring over her gifts, listening to Miss Amy's pit-patter of reminiscence, almost always about the little millinery shop and the women who had come there, watching the tie grow under her eager fingers and in turn the initials—a small pink one for Carol's handkerchief and a bold blue one on Charlie's—Janny was almost able to forget how she dreaded Christmas.

She dreaded the vacation, too. It would be a merry one for Carol. Already, with grown-up importance, she was treasuring square engraved invitations. Janny had heard her debate with her mother whether to go to Cissy Potter's or Blanche Walton's luncheon. "They're having it on the same day on purpose, Mamma," Carol had said. "Cissy's awfully jealous of Blanche and I know she wants to see how we girls will line up." Carol had admitted that she really knew Cissy better than Blanche, but to Janny's puzzlement, that made the basis of the ultimate decision that she should go to Blanche's.

Janny feared that the vacation would interrupt her pleasant intimacy with Mary. Timidly, on one or two

occasions, she had attempted to interest the family in the Paynes, but it had drawn only another warning from Aunt Maddy that she must avoid making close friendships with any of the girls at the High. This time Aunt Maddy added: "Under the circumstances, Janice."

Janny had told Miss Amy of Mary and her mother and her brother. She had told of Mrs. Payne's curious "business." "Kind of nice, that the factory girls have a chance to pick up those pretty things for next to nothing," Miss Amy had said. "It goes a sight farther than some kinds of charity." Miss Amy gave a dignity to Mrs. Payne's livelihood more than that she kept Mary and Garr in school by it.

"You don't think it's wrong, my being friends with Mary?" Janny had asked anxiously.

Miss Amy had answered that without reservation. "Go right ahead and be friends. They—" nodding her head toward the closed door, "can't expect you're not going to want *some* young friends. 'Twouldn't be human."

Christmas Day came on a wave of frenzied last-minute shopping in which Janny and Mary mingled, while Janny spent part of her allowance on gifts for Cousin Amy and Celia and for Mary, came on the aching feet of delivery boys and messenger boys rushing in and out of houses, came with holly-wreathed windows and doors, colored lights strung showily wherever they could be strung, came white with snow, with bells ringing. But the snow only made Janny the more homesick, the music of the bells rang hollow to

her ears, the laughter, the Merry Christmases hailing about her found no echo in her heart.

The family opened their gifts at the breakfast table. There were a great many packages—Carol's place was hidden by them. For the time the room seemed really gay, to take on something akin to the gaiety of Mother Faire's living room on Christmas morning. There was a mound of holly in the centre of the table and red candles on the mantel.

There was a big box on Janny's chair. She opened it and found that it contained a heavy coat. She had not expected such a gift—for a moment she thought it must be some mistake. "Is it really for me?" she asked. Uncle Nicholas answered her. "Do you like it?" He smiled at her.

"Oh, it's lovely," Janny cried. She stroked it with unbelieving fingers. She slipped it on. "See, isn't it lovely? Thank you very much, Uncle Nicholas, and Aunt Maddy."

Miss Amy was regarding her and the coat with a frown that sat oddly on her round, pleasant face. The frown abashed Janny. The coat *was* lovely and she could not see why Cousin Amy should not think so. But she took it off and put it carefully back in the box and turned to her other packages.

There was a bright-red middy tie from Mary and a pair of gloves from Miss Amy. In Miss Amy's box was a card from which a very fat, roguish Santa beamed a Christmas greeting. Under this Miss Amy had written in her small, slightly shaded handwriting: "A gift for my little friend and cousin, with love."

It was nice in Cousin Amy to add that—and the gloves were beautiful soft leather gloves. Janny flashed a warm wordless thanks toward Miss Amy, who was beaming now.

Then she opened her last package. It was small and flat. A book! Her fingers trembled as they fussed with the ribbon and paper. She knew it was from Doctor John and Mother Faire. It was a little book of verse. It smelled delightfully of the new leather of its binding and crisp paper and glue. And on the fly-leaf Doctor John had written: "We are sending this friend to you. I have marked some verses because they seem to belong to you. Our love goes with it on this happy, holy Christmas Day."

She put the book in her lap. She did not want to show it to the others.

Carol was opening her tissue-wrapped packages with business-like haste. "Oh, I know what *this* is——" She put it aside indifferently. "Cappie said she was going to give it to me. Mamma, *another* bottle of bath salts—and Joe knows I hate that kind! Oh, well, I'll put them away and give them to one of the girls next year! Oh, look, what a sweet pin!" Inevitably, in her procedure, Carol reached the little package Janny had tied with silver ribbon. She opened it, as she had the others, with a heedless tearing of the wrappers. "A handkerchief!" She read the card. "Why——" she stopped, looked at Janny. "Why, that's nice of you, Janny, to give me something. I didn't give you anything. I knew Mamma was getting the coat and I thought that would be from all of us."

She held the handkerchief for a moment, then put it with the bath salts.

Janny hated Carol at that moment, hated her pretty radiant face with its frame of gold hair, hated her cool blue eyes and her pretty smiling lips that could be so cruel. She had not wanted any one to give her anything, except of course Mother Faire and Doctor John —and Carol need not have said it as she did! She hated her and she hated herself for letting this searing, stinging feeling rise up and overwhelm her happiness on Christmas morning. But, her face flushing, she managed to give Carol smile for smile. Carol should not know that her light words had the power to torment her!

Now Charlie had opened his gift from her. "Did you embroider this, Janny? Say, that's nice in you. I certainly need a handkerchief!" Kevin was opening his. He smiled at her across the table, a quick shy smile that lighted his face, transforming it. "I like mine, too."

She knew Kevin meant it. And she knew Charlie would forget at once that she had bothered to give him anything.

Breakfast over, Mrs. Bartley ordered Celia to pick up the litter of paper and ribbon. Carol exclaimed: "Half-past ten already!" and flew off to some interest of her own. Miss Amy began to help Celia.

Janny wished Miss Amy and Celia would let her help them. But Miss Amy told her to go off and have a good time—like young folks should, on Christmas Day!

She took her gifts to her room. She sat down with

her book. But she could not read it—the very feel of it in her hands threatened to let loose the tears she would not shed.

She'd call up Mary on the telephone—just to wish her a merry Christmas. She wanted to hear Mary's steady voice. No one could mind. She went to the telephone in the hall. She had never used it; she gave the number with a prickly sensation of alarm. In a moment Mary's voice answered with a hearty "Merry Christmas."

"Oh, Jan, doing anything? Want to go with me while I take a Christmas basket to my 'family'? I'm going right now. Meet you at the corner of Maple—"

Janny at once put on her coat—the old ulster—and her hat. She walked quickly to join Mary, to hear about her Christmas, share her mission. For the time being, at least, she would rout those demons of loneliness, of bad feeling.

They had not far to walk to Mary's "family." West Newton, the factory district, known generally as the "mill side," lay close to the fine sleek heart of the city. One went straight from a block of spacious homes, concrete walks, curving drives, clipped lawns and shrubs, trim garages, to the dreary stretches of stucco cottages, so alike, so close to one another that they looked as if they had been strung there by some mechanical device. There were no trees in the "mill side," no paved streets; long piles of clay still remained where they had been thrown up in the hasty laying of sewer pipes and gas mains. They looked like pitiful fortifica-

tions guarding the naked little houses, already showing weather-beaten slats where the stucco had peeled off.

Beyond the wastes of mushroom houses a mile of factory belched smoke into the sky. Plumes of it, black as ink, were lifting now—on Christmas Day.

Janny had not been in West Newton before. She had never seen homes like these. In Painted Post the humblest make-shift roof had trees about it, the softening grace of bent boughs, green leaves. Here, patches of frozen mud showed yellow through the white snow; trails of the yellow clay marked where human machines walked back and forth, back and forth. A queue of the human machines was passing now, dinner pails glinting in the sun.

She asked Mary a great many questions, at which Mary laughed. "Of course people live in those houses. Why, those men are going to work. Yes, they work on Christmas. They work nights—all the time. The furnaces burn all the time. Garrett could have gotten a job in the mills but Mother wouldn't think of it. Yes, women work there, too."

Janny shuddered. "It's ugly," she said slowly.

"What's ugly? The houses? Wait until you see the inside of Mrs. Carruthers' cottage. It's fairly falling on their heads and it hasn't been built more than five years."

"I mean it's *all* ugly," emphasized Janny. "And it's horrid, making them work on Christmas."

Mary laughed a little shortly. There was an old seriousness in her face.

"I guess Christmas doesn't mean much to any of

them—the bosses at the mills or the workers. If Jimmie Carruthers didn't work to-day he'd be docked his pay and Grandma Carruthers would feel the pinch of it. In the long run what's the difference?"

"Oh, Mary!" Janny protested.

Mary shrugged her shoulders. "Well, what are Carol and Charlie Bartley's crowd doing to-day? What are we doing? Don't look so solemn, Janny. I guess it's the way in cities. You'll be like the rest of us when you've lived here longer."

Janny had no answer to that. Would she? She thought of Carol hastily examining her gifts, sorting them over, laying some aside to give away another year, appraising others—barter.

Mary was telling her about her "family." She explained that the families were assigned at Sunday-school. "I came to this one last year and I asked for it again. The father and mother are both dead—the father was killed two years ago out in the mills—something exploded. The company lets them live in the cottage and Jimmie is the only one who earns anything. Grandma Carruthers and the two little girls do all the housework. Grandma had a stroke and can't walk, but Jimmie fixed wheels for her chair so she manages to do a lot."

Before Janny could completely grasp the sordidness of Mary's matter-of-fact recital Mary turned into one of the little stucco cottages.

"Here we are," she said briefly and tapped on the door.

CHAPTER XIII

OUT OF THE PAST

"MERRY CHRISTMAS!"

But the holly-trimmed basket Mary put down on the table was the only sign of Christmas in the room.

Two thin-cheeked, thin-legged little girls pounced without ceremony upon the basket, poking grimy fingers into it. The grandmother answered Mary and reprimanded them in the same voice, a cheerful voice, as strong in its greeting to the older girls as in its promise of a licking to the little ones if they didn't keep their hands out of the basket.

While Mary and old Mrs. Carruthers talked Janny sat on the edge of a chair, furtively looking about the room. It spoke eloquently of the bareness, the makeshiftness of the lives that went on in it. In one corner was a cot bed, unmade. The boy Jim's clothes hung on pegs over it. Dark patches of grease stained the linoleum on the floor. The one table in the room groaned under sticky dishes. More dishes were piled in the sink. From the sink to the stove stretched a line of washing, two faded gingham dresses, a heavy flannel shirt, gray-white cotton underwear with big patches. Perhaps old Mrs. Carruthers had "managed" that washing to-day! Something strongly odorous of onions was simmering in a kettle on the rusty stove. The air was heavy with the odor of grease and strong soap, onions, the damp of the wash, the exudation of human bodies.

Grandma Carruthers was apologizing for the look of the room. "We didn't calculate we'd have company. The girls are lazy this morning. They're getting lazier every day, I tell them." Janny looked at the little girls, slips of things, who, if they lived on Maple Avenue, would be playing this minute with their Christmas dolls. They were making faces at Grandma because she called them lazy, but she was beaming upon them notwithstanding.

Janny's fingers itched to tackle the unwashed dishes. She wanted to tell the little girls to go out and play. When she whispered to Mary her thought, Mary gasped at the idea. In a moment, though, she caught something of Janny's spirit. "I hate dishes!" But she promptly began to roll up her sleeves as she said it.

The little girls watched this strange conduct of their visitors with wide incredulous eyes. Even in Grandma Carruthers' face was something of their wonder. In the passing of time Mrs. Carruthers, like others of her lot, may have come to look upon charity baskets from the other side of the city as her due, but this was beyond her imagining.

The girls laughed a great deal over their work. Janny laughed at Mary's nose because it persisted in curling upward from the greasy dishes.

With an expert air Janny peeped into the steaming pan on the stove. Stew! But it was a very thin stew, more savory of onion than of anything else. And stew on Christmas!

"Life's funny," was her thought as she put the

cover back on the dish. What was the law behind it all? At this very minute Miss Amy was helping Celia prepare a huge turkey while the Carrutherses were going to eat thin stew on Christmas Day. Why did some pack "baskets" and others look for them? Janny did not know the answer. She did not know that others, older, wiser in experience than she, were groping scientifically, ardently, stupidly, for the answer. She only felt, vaguely, that there must be something in this world that could bring human beings together under the same happy sun—something that folks had lost, maybe, or never had known.

The sink scoured, the dish-cloths wrung out and hung up, the room whisked into order, the girls pulled chairs up to the old woman. Grandma was very friendly now. The little girls were not staring any longer. They had withdrawn into a corner, each with an orange from the basket, and they were chattering over the game of counting the seeds. Beth had "bet" Sally that her orange had more.

Mrs. Carruthers was looking intently at Janny. "Have I seen you before?" she asked abruptly.

"No, Grandma," Mary answered. "She hasn't lived in Newton very long. She's a friend of mine—in school."

"You're like some one—— What did you say your name was?" Grandma persisted. As she leaned forward in her chair her old eyes seemed to be searching beyond Janny into a long-ago past.

"Janny Bartley," Janny answered.

The old woman straightened. Her eyes grew sharp, resentful.

"Bartley? You're one of those Bartleys on Maple Avenue? You're Nicholas Bartley's girl?"

"I live there—but I'm not his girl—I'm his niece. My father was Roger Bartley."

"Roger Bartley!" The old woman's voice shrilled. She laid a bony hand on Janny's arm. "You're Roger's girl? My boy—Roger?"

Janny was frightened. The old woman must be mad! But she did not wait for Janny to answer. "My little Roger! Didn't I take him in my arms from his mother on her dying bed!"

"You mean——" Janny stammered.

"I was nurse in Jonathan Bartley's family 'til the boys grew too big to need one and then I stayed on in the kitchen. I was a widow. My own boy was living out with my sister on their farm. I stayed there until Roger was nineteen——" Mrs. Carruthers stopped abruptly.

Janny was trembling unaccountably. She forgot Mary, forgot the two little girls in their corner counting their seeds. "Go on," her eyes implored the old woman.

"My poor boy Roger—he wasn't like his brother Nicholas. He wasn't much for school. And Jonathan Bartley was set on making a lawyer of Roger—of both of them. Bartleys were always lawyers."

"And Roger ran away." Impatiently Janny put

the words in the old woman's mouth. "Was that why he ran away?"

Mrs. Carruthers nodded. "Yes. He ran away. I remember like it was yesterday. When he heard of it Jonathan Bartley sat like stone—sat in his room with the law books. He said that Roger couldn't come back until he was ready to heed his wishes. He told Nicholas he wasn't to help his brother. I suppose Jonathan Bartley figured he was doing right by the boy—but he was hard. He'd always been hard with him. He was a good boy, Roger was—a good, brave boy for all he was so different from the others. A few weeks afterwards a letter came telling them that Roger'd shipped on a sailing vessel out of Boston for some heathenish place, and that finished the old man. He'd never been one to let himself go much—except when he'd quarrel with Roger over his school—but that night I thought he'd gone crazy. He called Roger all the names he could lay his tongue to. And right before my eyes—I followed him to the parlor, for he looked to me like a sick man—didn't he take up a fancy paper knife from the table and slash to bits the painting he'd had done of Roger the year before, up and down and across he slashed until there wan't enough left to know what it'd been. And he'd paid a fancy price, too, to have it painted. Then he saw me standing there in the door and he looked like he wanted to cut me up, too. He knew Roger was my favorite, that I'd stood up for him. 'Go,' he said to me in a terrible voice. He didn't need to tell me. I'd have gone without it. I was

through in that house. I packed my things and went straight out to my sister's. I wouldn't be beholdened to a hard man like that even for the wages I earned. God knows I've seen hard times since that, with my boy's wife dying when little Sal there was born and him himself killed out at the mill, but I wouldn't ask a favor even of Nicholas Bartley. Not I! Shutting their proud hearts on that poor boy." She seemed to realize Janny. "And so you're Roger's girl——"

Tears were streaming down Janny's cheeks. She knelt by the old woman's chair, held the two old hands tightly. "I'm so glad I found you," she whispered. Briefly she told Mrs. Carruthers that all she had of her father was a memory. "He laughed a great deal. He was so good to me," she said brokenly. She told of her Uncle Nicholas' finding her in Painted Post, bringing her here to Newton. "I think he wants to be good to me, too," she finished, anxious to give Uncle Nicholas his due of credit.

"Yes, he would. But he's like his father. They set a lot on doing their duty," her voice was grim. "But sometimes duty's an awful blinding thing—they can't see an inch beyond it."

Mary had joined little Beth and Sally. Together they were unpacking the Christmas basket, moving on tiptoe from table to cupboard.

Mrs. Carruthers took her hands from Janny's and briskly wheeled her chair into an adjoining room, returning almost at once with a box in her lap. She turned over its contents, old photographs and tintypes,

letters tied together. Finally she put a faded photograph into Janny's hand. "There. You can have it. The old man had 'em took from the painting and he give me one. That was before—I didn't think I'd ever part with it, but it seems like it belongs to you even more'n me."

For a moment the lines of the photograph were only a blur to Janny. Then, as her vision cleared, she saw the boyish face, the chin thrust out a bit too defiantly, the wide, eager mouth with the lift of mischief in the lips, the deep-set eyes under heavy brows—Bartley brows. And while she looked the face changed magically to the one she carried in her heart, always bent to her, laughter in the eyes. Perhaps——

"Janny, we must go soon, I promised Mother——" Mary was saying. It brought Janny sharply back to the moment, to old Mrs. Carruthers, waiting, smiling, to the little girls, staring again.

"Oh, thank you—thank you so much," she cried, hugging the faded photograph close to her. She leaned to the old woman and kissed her. "I'll love you the—the way I'm sure—Roger did." Quaintly she used the name Mrs. Carruthers knew.

"Now don't you be showing your uncle that picture," Mrs. Carruthers warned her briskly. "Don't know as he could object, but if he's as like his father as he was when he was a boy I wouldn't be too sure what he'd do."

Janny could promise emphatically that she would not. Not for worlds would she let any eyes but hers see her treasure!

"And I don't know as I want you to tell your uncle you found me. I'd rather starve than have his kind of charity."

"May I come again?" Janny asked shyly.

As the girls walked away from the cottage Janny turned and looked back at it. It did not seem ugly to her now, not even like the hundreds of other cottages that stretched for dismal distances every way she looked. It wasn't like those others, for it held something fine —Mrs. Carruthers' loyalty to the boy who was her father. And, in that loyalty and love they shared, Janny touched without knowing it that "something" that had the power to bring her and the old woman on a common ground, where stew and turkey did not matter.

As they walked back to Maple Avenue, Mary talked of everything but what had happened at the cottage and Janny was grateful to her for that. After they separated Janny ran the rest of the way home without knowing that she ran.

Oh, she was happy, now. Across the years, across all the Christmas Days of all the years, something sweet, enduring, had touched her.

The house was very quiet. Carol and Charlie had gone off to some Christmas gathering. Janny had heard them talk about it. She could hear Miss Amy and Celia talking downstairs as they prepared the dinner.

She wanted to be alone. She sat cross-legged on her little bed and looked at her picture—the two faces. It would always show her the two faces, the boy's face and behind it and over it the other face, the one she

remembered. She talked to it softly, in whispers just above her breath.

"I'm grown-up, now, Roger. At least—I understand." She wanted him to know that she understood everything. He had run away because he would not be a lawyer. Mrs. Carruthers had said he was a good, brave boy.

She remembered Mary's story—how Mary had said she had grown to understanding in that moment when she realized that her mother had not always been what she was now, tired, untidy, selfless. Well, *she* had come to her moment of understanding, too.

She put her picture away in a bureau drawer carefully, tenderly. She'd be lonely often, but it wouldn't be the same kind of loneliness. She'd be hurt—Carol still could hurt her, Aunt Maddy, even Uncle Nicholas in his forgetfulness, but it couldn't hurt as deep. She had a talisman against it all. Oh, this had been a wonderful Christmas, after all!

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE BARN

JANNY was troubled over Kevin. He would not study Cicero with her any more. "Oh, I can get the stuff by myself," he had told her ungraciously. She doubted that he was "getting" it. He was absorbed in his occupations in the old barn, where he had rigged up a coal burner and was working every afternoon until dark. Then he would come into the house, dirty, his hands red with the cold, sometimes dejected, sometimes lost in some inner speculation which shut him away from every one.

Janny had gone again to the little cottage in West Newton, taking fruit to old Mrs. Carruthers and candy to the children. She had listened to long stories of her father's boyhood, had pieced them together afterwards, filled them in with her own imaginings until she had a vivid whole. She saw her father, restless, rebelling to the narrow dictates of the "hard" Jonathan Bartley, eager for adventure that could not be found in dull law books. "He had a heart as soft as a woman's, that boy did," Mrs. Carruthers had told her. "He was so shy with folks that they thought he was nasty dispositioned. But I knew he wasn't. Because he wasn't made off the same piece with all the other Bartleys, his pa thought he was a loafer and shiftless. But *I* knew different. He'd work harder than the rest of them put

together when it was something he liked to do. And he loved his folks. That's why he run off. He couldn't stand the everlasting wrangling any more'n he could stand his pa's notion of his being a lawyer and nothing but a lawyer." And after that Janny had found herself again likening Kevin to her father. Kevin did not want to be a lawyer, either, poor Kevin. She thought of the rows and rows of law books in their dried yellow bindings on her uncle's shelves. Of course Kevin would hate them—that kind of books.

Until now Janny had not minded Kevin's abandoning the lessons in Cousin Amy's room, for she was spending so much of her afternoons with Mary that her own school work had to be done in the evening. She was finding increasing pleasure in Mary's company. She had not known a friendship could offer so much. As their intimacy grew she met in Mary changing moods that flashed out in the most casual conversations, startled her, vanished almost as quickly as they came. Janny did not always like these different Marys, sometimes a sullen Mary, or sometimes bitter, or proud, or cynical. She felt shy and inexperienced before them, secretly ashamed, but always interested, and always more fond. She came to know that Mary's firm lips and grave eyes were a mask worn to hide those other Marys, keep them in order.

She found she could disagree with Mary and still be friends. They argued over Carol. Janny had attempted, out of loyalty rather than conviction, to defend Carol against Mary's scorn. Mary had called Carol

a " feather-brained little prig." Janny contended that Carol had a right to be a little superior. " Why, pray? " Mary had retorted. " She's pretty—I'll grant. She's the prettiest girl in Newton, but is that everything? "

They argued over Janny's beloved Doctor John. Mary thought it a shame that he should bury himself off " up there." " But maybe if he lived in a city he wouldn't be like he is." Janny could not see dear, shabby Doctor John in a city, like Uncle Nicholas, or Mr. Miles. They argued it gravely, Mary with the contempt for small places inherited from city-born ancestors, Janny with her father's love of wide horizons, but only limited words to express it.

They argued over little things in school, the different girls, the respective merits of the teachers, the value of their studies. They argued over great things in life—love and marriage, careers. Janny saw life a land of desire, waiting for her eager feet, Mary saw only fences marking off the pleasant fields for the privileged.

Mary laughed a great deal at Janny's inexperience. " The reason I like you so much, old dear, is that I can talk to you just as crazily as I want to and you don't look at me as if you thought I was crazy. I wonder why. I suppose it's because you're such a simple little thing."

Janny did not mind Mary's calling her simple. " I never had a chum before, so if you talk crazily I don't know it, you see."

" That's it. You haven't any standards by which to judge me. Well, you're lucky. Standards are stupid

things—like closed doors. I wonder why we use them. I suppose because we're so stupid, after all."

Janny was not lonely, now. And with the lifting of that weight she knew a contentment almost as happy as that of the old days in Painted Post.

She knew now at waking the old zest for what each day would hold. She had the engrossing interests of school and her friendship with Mary. After school there was skating, practising her "figures" for the carnival, the fittings of the costume Mrs. Payne was making for her. Mrs. Payne had found an old wine-red velvet coat and was cutting it over to Janny's size. There was enough of the velvet to make a little cap.

But examinations were coming in two weeks. Though Janny had no particular dread of them, she allowed herself to be carried on the popular wave of apprehension, and she feared them for poor Kevin. So one day, returning from school and seeing a spiral of smoke curling from the old stovepipe Kevin had fitted into the barn window, she decided suddenly to visit him there and remind him how close the examinations were, beg him to work with her again. She had a guilty sense of having deserted Kevin at the most critical time. She went to the barn and boldly opened the door.

The air was close, foul with coal gas and thick with dust. Kevin, at work at his table by the one grimy window, turned to her, startled, angry at the interruption. "Say, who told you you could come in here?" he growled.

"I want to talk to you," Janny stammered, disconcerted by his greeting.

Then her eyes fell upon the table. What in her first visit had looked to her like a doll's house appeared now as a miniature stage, lighted with tiny electric lights. Crudely carved, painted wooden figures of all sizes stood upon it, to which were attached strings and wires.

She walked over to the table quickly, curiosity overcoming her timidity. "What in the world is it, Kevin? Did you make it? Did you make these dolls?"

Kevin grunted in assent.

"Why, how wonderful! What are the strings for? Can you make them really move?" There was honest interest in Janny's voice, no hint of the scorn, the ridicule which Kevin's sensitiveness dreaded.

"Sure, I can make 'em move," Kevin said proudly.

Janny leaned over the table excitedly. She had read of Punch and Judys, but to find one here in the old barn, before her eyes——

"Oh, make them move for me, please, Kevin," she begged.

Kevin shook his head. "They don't work the way I want 'em to, yet. But I'm fixing up something different. When I get it I'll give you a show." He explained to Janny that he had been working on the "thing" for months. "I saw a marionette show at school last winter. I helped the fellow and I figured how I could improve on his. It's a job, though. I'm nowhere near through. But I'll get it."

Janny looked from the puppets to Kevin where he stood beside her. His shoulders were flung back, now,

the sullen scowl was gone from his face. His eyes were dark with intentness as he showed Janny what this wire meant and that. "I'll work it with a battery—easy as can be—when I get it all rigged up."

"Why, Kevin, you're wonderful!" said Janny, softly. She thought he was, to make the dolls and the little stage—it *had* been an old doll's house of Carol's.

"Oh, it isn't so much," Kevin said sheepishly, but the warm tone in his voice betrayed that he liked Janny's praise. "If this goes all right, then I'll make better-looking puppets—spend more time on them, you see. This big fellow, here, is Ali Baba. It's going to be Ali Baba and his Forty Thieves when it's anything."

"Oh, Kevin, let me make costumes for them. I can! I'd love to. I'll ask Mary for pieces of silk and things. It'd be such fun to dress them. It will make it so real. Let me help. I'm in the secret now, anyway—you can't put me out."

Kevin could not deny that fact. Janny was in the secret. He was not sorry; he admitted that he had been stumped about the costumes and that often he needed an extra pair of hands with the wires. But he hesitated, frowning.

"You might give it away," he growled, out of an inherent masculine belief that a girl could not keep a secret.

"I won't tell a soul, Kevin—not until you tell me I may."

Still Kevin hesitated. "I'm not going to have

Charlie razzing me and Dad blowing up because I spend my time out here——"

Janny's face sobered. Kevin's mention of his father brought sharply to her her purpose for seeking Kevin out.

"Oh—Kevin. The exams. That's what I came out here to talk about. They're only two weeks off. I wanted you to promise to work hard for them. Kevin, let's make a bargain. I'll make the costumes and help you with the dolls if you'll promise to study Cicero with me again—like we were. In Cousin Amy's room. If you pass Cicero then Uncle Nicholas won't mind how much time you spend on the dolls!"

Kevin could see sound reason in Janny's pleading. He agreed to her "bargain," not without some grumbling, which Janny cheerfully ignored.

"Go on working, now. I'll sit here as quiet as a mouse until you tell me what I can do."

Thereafter, Janny hurried home each afternoon from school, refusing Mary's urging to stop at her house for "just a little while," refusing even to go skating. She felt important, privileged, to share the secret of Kevin's activities in the old barn. She had begged the scraps of silk from Mrs. Payne and from Miss Amy and sat on a box in the barn, her feet against the coal burner, cutting and sewing and measuring, while Kevin worked with his wires.

Sometimes, watching Kevin absorbed in his work, his big hands puttering patiently among the complicated strings and wires, changing one, readjusting another,

she thought of him and not what he was trying to do. Kevin was *not* stupid. He knew a lot about a great many things. He was not horrid, either. He was nice; perhaps he might be even nicer when she knew him better. She liked his enthusiasm when something went the way he wanted it to. "That's *that*," he would cry, running both hands through his poor abused hair. His face was perpetually streaked with dust, but the disfigurement could not hide the glow on it. When things went wrong he sulked and growled and threw chisels and little hammers about, and Janny laughed softly to herself even at that. It was exciting finding this new Kevin! And she did not think any one else knew him—not even Cousin Amy, who liked him best but who never saw beyond the "poor Kevin."

At times she forgot her promise not to talk and talked to him about school, and Kevin did not mind, though he did not always answer. She told him about things that had happened in Painted Post, about Doctor John, for Janny could not talk about anything very long without bringing in her Doctor John. "He'd be awfully interested in what you're trying to do, Kevin. If you tell me I may, I'm going to write to him all about it."

She talked about the books she liked to read. She found to her delighted surprise that Kevin, who was supposed to hate anything in a book binding, really loved some books and had read a great many, a surreptitious reading, lest some one, Charlie particularly, make fun of him. He avoided what he called "sissy"

books, preferring stories of adventure and pioneering, sea tales, history when it had the element of ruthless conquest. "I like books where a fellow slashes straight after the thing, and the more people he has to kill to get it, the better the story. I don't like books with a lot of talk back and forth."

One day she took her little Christmas book out to the barn. Kevin had professed deep scorn of poetry. "No sense to it," he had said. "All fancy—sort of camouflage of the real thing." But she wanted Kevin to like the verses Doctor John had marked. She had come to think they belonged only to her and Doctor John, but now she wanted to share them with Kevin.

She read them softly, almost chanting the lines:

"Rim of the world,
Widen my eyes by a thought."

Kevin's big hands had gone on fussing with the strings while she read, but Janny knew by his face that he had been listening.

"That's great," he growled. "Got something to it." He flung up his head. "But who can find the rim of the world here, I'd like to know!" he challenged.

With a vague alarm Janny saw the flare of restlessness in his dark eyes, in the movements of his hands. He was waiting defiantly for her answer. "I don't know," she replied a little helplessly, shutting her book. "I—I think it's something inside of you, Kevin —something you can find—anywhere."

"Pooh! That's all you know!" the boy shot back at her.

CHAPTER XV

THE CARNIVAL

"JANNY, it's perfect!" Mary pronounced her verdict after a careful appraisal of the coat Mrs. Payne had made for Janny.

The bodice of the garment wrapped closely the slender lines of Janny's figure, while the skirt rippled away from her knees. The edge of the collar and skirt and cuffs were trimmed with fur. The little cap set tightly down over Janny's head with a cocky bow of the velvet over one ear.

Janny shared Mary's satisfaction in the garment. She thought it perfect, too. That in reality it was a little theatrical, over-conspicuous, in her inexperience she did not know.

Mary was getting a vicarious satisfaction out of the carnival. A seasoned stage manager could not have been more serious, more nervous, even at times irritable, than Miss Mary Payne planning the first appearance of Janice Bartley, fancy skater. She worried repeatedly for fear some "dark horse" might go in. To Janny's puzzlement Mary explained that a dark horse was some one no one expected. "Some of those Swedish girls in West Newton are wonderful skaters. They skate before they walk in Sweden, I believe. One of them may go into the carnival!"

Over and over Mary enjoined Janny to secrecy.

Mary wanted only to surprise the "crowd" at school. They decided that Janny must don the velvet coat and cap at Mary's house on the way to the lake. Janny longed to show Miss Amy the pretty garment, but Mary shook her head even on that. Time enough to show off after Janny had won! "You've got to win!" Mary said for the hundredth time.

The examinations at school were over. Janny carried her report card in her pocket now. It was a very creditable report, her Latin mark, especially. Miss Watkins had commended her for that, and Doctor John would, too, when he knew about it. But she really thought more of the carnival than of her examinations. There was going to be music, there would be crowds, the velvet coat was so very pretty. And then that "dark horse" might appear at the last moment! Her spirits lifted and fell and lifted again, over and over. And if she won—there'd be the fun of telling them at home. Maybe Charlie would take her skating at the private rink. Carol *must* give her a little warm praise!

As she went into the door of her uncle's house she encountered Kevin coming out. She hailed him happily. But with a brief "hullo" he went on toward the street. Something in his face, in his manner, startled Janny. *His* examination report! Her heart sank like lead; she called to him but Kevin did not answer.

She did not see him again until dinner. He came in to it late, slipped into his chair with a scowl and a brief explanation. He avoided Janny's anxious eyes. Janny looked from him to her uncle's face, praying

desperately that nothing would be said of the examinations just finished. She could not eat for shivering.

But for all her desperate hope the talk turned to the week's tests. "I passed English History without looking at the book," Charlie boasted. Charlie held that an achievement.

"I got a ninety in my French, Dad," Carol exclaimed.

"French—that's easy," Charlie teased.

Janny shrank down into her chair. Her own card was still in her pocket with its A in Cicero, but she would have cut out her tongue before she would mention it. Oh, if only Charlie and Carol would keep up their bantering, if only her uncle would not——

"What word have you for us, Kevin?" her uncle asked quietly.

Kevin lifted his head defiantly. "I flunked Cicero. I'm through."

Janny saw a dull red mantle her uncle's face, then fade from it, leaving it gray. "Well, *I* am not," he answered Kevin, in a thick voice. She looked down at her plate that she might not see his face or Kevin's. But she did not eat.

It was amazing to her that the others could eat, that Charlie and Carol could go on with their chatter as if nothing had happened. She wished she dared tell them all of the marionettes—how clever Kevin was with them. But she could not—her promise held her. She had never seen that look on her uncle's face, heard that tone in his voice. It boded ill for poor Kevin.

And Kevin *had* studied for the examination. She knew how hard he had studied.

Presently Nicholas Bartley left the table. She heard the door of his study close behind him. The closing of that door now always tightened poor Janny's heart.

Kevin went off as soon as he could. Janny had no opportunity to speak to him then, and in the morning he was up and away before she came down.

It was a perfect winter's day. "It's made for us," Mary declared jubilantly. They went early to the lake, Janny walking between Mary and Garr, conscious of the velvet coat and cap, of the importance of the moment. Mary did not say much but she walked with her chin set stubbornly. Garr was full of last-minute warnings.

A crowd already had gathered at the lake. They pressed against the ropes which marked off the course for the races, they fringed the wooded banks. A band, mittened and muffled to the ears, was playing in an improvised stand. Over everything lay the sunshine in a thin gold sheen.

Mary and Janny were immediately surrounded by schoolmates. Every one was very gay. Some of the girls were going into the races.

Janny glanced over the moving crowds for her cousins. She wished Kevin were there. But she did not see him.

Garr won the senior race, Mary and Janny lustily cheering him on the finish. He took his honor modestly. "It was a cinch from the start," he protested

when his friends gathered around him. "Now, Janny, it's up to you," he warned in a low voice. "You're not nervous, are you?"

Janny was not nervous; in her excitement she had forgotten her own part in the programme. A ring had been made for the fancy skating and an official was calling out the first of the entrants. She stood close to Garr and watched with interest a man, gray-haired but lithe, execute a complicated figure. After him a woman went out. "Pooh, you can put it all over them," mumbled Garr in her ear. "You've got *new* stuff." One hapless aspirant tumbled ignominiously while the crowd laughed. "This is Mrs. Olsen, who won last year," Mary explained, when the watchers clapped a large fair woman into the ring. That she was a favorite was evidenced by the hearty cheering.

"You're next," Garr was saying.

In her turn Janny moved forward. As she did so she smiled over her shoulder to Mary. And just then she saw Charlie's face in the crowd. She waved to him.

The High girls cheered for her. Others, seeing the pretty figure, the eager young face under the tight little cap, took it up. "Who is she?" Janny heard some one ask. The official signalled to her to begin.

"I'm glad Charlie came," Janny was thinking. Now she would skate well for his approval. She would skate well, too, to do Doctor John credit. The figure Doctor John had taught her was as simple, as natural, as the lift and dip of flight to a bird. She moved easily, lightly, through its graceful curves, outward, inward,

a quick sway and turn, a little upward spring, a dip and twirl, every muscle of her slender body in rhythm. The crowd watched in absolute silence until she finished with a waltzing turn that took her breathless back to the edge of the circle. Then it broke out in a prolonged cheer.

"Good girl! You ate 'em up," cried Garr, pounding her on the shoulder.

Their schoolmates closed in around Janny and Mary. They pressed Janny with excited questioning. Where had she learned to skate like that? Where had she gotten the darling coat? They were generous in their praise of Janny. Mary's eyes shone exultingly; she was tasting the fruit of her expectation.

The judges were whispering together. Presently one stepped out and announced that the first place in the fancy skating was awarded to "Miss Bartley." Garr pushed Janny forward. Very gravely the official pinned a small medal upon her velvet coat while the crowd cheered. Mrs. Olsen was given second place amid a more perfunctory applause.

Suddenly Janny heard Charlie's voice behind her, speaking her name. She turned quickly to him, eager for his praise. But his face was set in disapproving lines.

"Come on, get out of here," he said brusquely, his hand under Janny's elbow. He ignored Garr and Mary.

Charlie's face was so like his mother's that Janny obeyed him as unquestioningly as she would have obeyed Aunt Maddy's cold command. "I've got the car over

here," he explained briefly when they had broken through to the edge of the crowd. "Here, let me take those skates off."

Seated in the car, Janny turned to him, shyly expecting some word of approval. On her face still glowed the delight of her triumph; the heart under the little medal was still beating fast.

But Charlie was frowning. "Are you crazy, Janny? If Mother hears about all this she'll throw a fit. She won't let Carol come to the lake—with all the roughnecks."

The glow died out of Janny's face. She sat very straight in the car, her lips tight pressed in her effort to conceal her disappointment. She was not thinking of the "fit" Aunt Maddy might throw—she was thinking that Charlie did not consider her little triumph anything at all.

"Of course I won't say anything about it," Charlie continued, magnanimously, "but it'll be in the newspapers, sure as anything. I saw some fellows there with cameras. And Mother hates that sort of thing—thinks it's cheap and common." Charlie's voice took on a big-brother tone. "And you ought not to be seen with that Payne chap. He's all right, I suppose, but he isn't in the good crowd at school—my crowd."

Janny paid no attention to that. She was too startled to defend her friendship with Mary and Garr. Unknowingly she had offended some Bartley creed. "Common and cheap." She could see Aunt Maddy's face. Her own face grew troubled.

"I'll drive around to the garage and you sneak in the back door," directed Charlie. He glanced meaningly at the velvet coat. "Better hustle your circus trappings out of sight as quick as you can."

So Janny's anticipated hour ended in her fleeing past Celia up the back stairs to her room. With trembling fingers she took off the wine-red garment that had seemed so beautiful. She began to feel all the sensations of a wrongdoer, found herself listening for voices, for footsteps. She hid the coat away in the back of her wardrobe. She put the medal in the bureau drawer under her underclothes without looking at it. Her face was burning and her heart beating with sickening palpitation.

Before dinner Charlie tapped on her door. He held a newspaper out to her. On its front page were pictures snapped at the carnival. Charlie's finger pointed to one indistinct figure, under which was printed in large black letters: "Miss Bartley."

"I knew it would be in," Charlie said grimly. "But I'm going to hide the paper, Janny. Let them think the boy did not deliver one to-night."

Janny only managed something like a "thank you" to Charlie for offering to hide the paper. She herself would have preferred to tell Aunt Maddy the whole story and explain that she had not known she was doing anything Aunt Maddy would not like, but Charlie seemed to know best.

Neither Carol nor Aunt Maddy were at dinner. Carol was at Joe Merry's and Aunt Maddy had a head-

ache. When Miss Amy told them at the table that Aunt Maddy had a headache Charlie glanced at Janny with a significant lift of his eyebrows and Janny blushed with a blush that burned to her toes.

She blushed again when Nicholas Bartley expressed annoyance that the boy had not delivered the paper.

After dinner Mary telephoned to her. Mabel Carpenter had invited them both over to her house "to celebrate." She'd invited some of the other girls and boys from school. Garr was going and they'd come up for her, if she could go. Mabel had a moving-picture machine and they'd dance, maybe, and Mabel had said her mother was going to make fruit salad. Janny heard her through with a miserable heart. She wanted to go with them to Mabel's, but she answered that she couldn't go—no, she couldn't *possibly* go. No, there was no use asking. No, there wasn't anything the matter with her——

"Well, your voice sounds awfully funny," Mary retorted over the wire.

Janny retreated to her own room. She could not even write to Doctor John about winning the fancy skating, though she did not think Doctor John would see anything wrong in it. What had been wrong? What *were* all these queer don'ts and do's that she could not understand? Was she just stupid that she did not understand?

She conceded that she should have asked Aunt Maddy if she could go into the contest. But she had kept it a secret simply to surprise them. She would

tell Aunt Maddy that. She would tell her all about it as soon as Aunt Maddy got over her headache—she could not endure hiding the thing, having Charlie look at her with meaning eyes. "Cheap and common." The words rang in her ears.

She heard Carol's voice calling to her mother. She heard Carol running up the stairs. Perhaps—— She began to tremble, guiltily. After a moment Carol called to her from the outer hall, in a high, petulant voice. "Janny! Are you in your room? Mother wants to see you."

On dragging feet Janny obeyed the summons. A lamp burned close to the chaise-longue on which Aunt Maddy lay against many pillows. Its glow made her face the whiter and brought out the deep shadows around her eyes. "She knows," thought Janny even before she saw the newspaper in Aunt Maddy's hand.

Carol still wore her coat and hat. Her face was flushed with indignation and there was a hint of tears in her voice.

"I hope you're satisfied, Janny, making yourself conspicuous! And now every one thinks it was I. Why, Mother, every one I met coming home was laughing at me—about that awful picture. If it looked like anything but a third-rate movie actress I wouldn't care so much." She turned back to Janny. "At least you might have given some other name! You could have explained that you really didn't *belong* to this family."

Under Carol's attack Janny's confusion slowly cleared, cleared to a sense of injustice. Carol was so

needlessly cruel. But she did not answer. Aunt Maddy straightened from her pillows.

"I thought I had warned you, Janny, that, while you are living here, you must conduct yourself with consideration for us—especially Carol. You are not showing yourself grateful to your uncle for the shelter he is giving you. I will not tell him about this, for he has enough to worry him without adding to the burden. Please go, now. And refrain, hereafter, as much as you can, from conduct that is so conspicuous—and common."

Janny turned and walked out of the room. She heard Carol repeating that she couldn't bear having any one think that awful picture in the paper was *her* picture.

Shut in her own room, Janny gave way to despairing bitterness. No, she did not belong to this family. She did not want to belong, any more than Carol and Aunt Maddy wanted her to. She knew it all now—how they didn't want her, why Aunt Maddy had asked Uncle Nicholas if he were crazy, that day she came—

She looked around the little room. It had lost its friendliness, looked no more than a cooped-up, unlovely space. Out of all the wide, pleasant, sunny rooms in the big house this was all Aunt Maddy had been willing to give her.

She couldn't be like Cousin Amy—grateful for a roof and three square meals a day. She wanted more than that.

The happiness she had built up during the last few

months tumbled to a sorry wreck. Again she was the bewildered girl she had been at her first coming, hurt, lonely.

She would not stay here—where she was not wanted. She'd tell her uncle that she couldn't stay. She'd go back to Painted Post, where she was happy. She'd pack her things and tell her uncle at once, this evening.

She opened a bureau drawer with the intention of taking her belongings from the mean little bureau. Her hands gathered an armful of clothing and as they did so encountered the photograph of her father. She took it out and looked at it. The boyish eyes laughed at her. "Scared, are you, little one?" The old challenge came to her over the years of memory.

A sob breaking deep in Janny's breast escaped her lips. Tears came between her and the beloved face. One splashed on the faded photograph. She wiped it carefully away. Then she put the clothing back in the bureau drawer, folding each separate garment neatly.

She knew what she would do. She would go to Uncle Nicholas and tell him all about her part in the carnival, tell him why she had kept it all a secret. He would listen. *He* must know she had not meant to be common.

The house was quiet. Uncle Nicholas doubtless was in his study. She knew he sat there late into the night, for often she had heard Aunt Maddy protest against his habit.

She opened her door and tiptoed down the hall and down the stairs. A thin line of light shone from under

the study door. She opened it without the ceremony of knocking. But on the threshold she stopped short, appalled.

Her uncle sat in his chair, one arm clutching his side, the other flung out across the desk upon which lay the evening paper. His body was writhing as if in pain.

Janny tried to speak, to call his name, but her voice froze in her throat. Running to him, she caught his arm.

He waved his hand weakly toward a drawer. "There. In there. Get it—quick. A—a bottle." His words came with difficulty.

She opened the drawer he indicated and took out a small bottle of white pellets. "One. Give—me—one." His fingers groped for them.

She took out the pellet and he swallowed it quickly. After a moment he sank back into his chair and lifted a face, white with exhaustion, to her.

"Oh—it's—*you!*"

Great beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. With one hand he still clutched his side.

Janny stood tongue-tied, aghast before the suffering she had witnessed. Aghast, too, before a greater terror. Perhaps *she* had done this. There was the evening paper! She had made Uncle Nicholas so terribly angry that it had made him ill!

"That is the hardest one I have ever had," he groaned, not seeming really to address Janny. "Is your aunt in her room?" he asked after a moment.

Janny nodded.

"I wonder—can you help me—upstairs? I am horribly tired."

As he struggled to his feet, he reached for her shoulder. Leaning on her thus, he walked slowly to the stairs, up the stairs, pausing now and then as if for breath. Reaching his room, Janny turned on the lights, opened his bed, brought his pajamas from the clothes closet. "Hadn't I better call Cousin Amy—or Carol —or some one?" she asked in an anxious whisper.

He shook his head. "No, no one. I'll do—nicely. I don't want you to say a word about this, child. Your Aunt Maddy must not worry. Go, now, I am all right." He managed a wan smile to reassure her.

Janny went as he bade her. Now, added to all the emotions she had endured this day, was sheer alarm. She could not bear it alone. She fled straight to Miss Amy's room.

CHAPTER XVI

"THE END OF THE ROPE"

The first thing Miss Amy did was to pick up the piecework quilt from the sofa and wrap it around Janny. "You're shaking like you had the ague," she said. "Don't say a word until you get warm."

Miss Amy had been in bed when Janny burst in. She sat now in her bathrobe, on the edge of a chair, holding Janny's hand tightly.

"I—I can't wait to get warm," Janny protested. Even with the old quilt around her she could not stop trembling. "I—I've got to tell some one——"

Miss Amy nodded. Homesickness, she was thinking. She'd had it, goodness knew, had it come on hard like toothache right in the middle of the night! She held Janny's hand tighter.

Janny's story tumbled out. She talked fast, incoherently. Cousin Amy knew about Mary, of course—she'd told her how nice Mary was, hadn't she? The carnival—she hadn't known it would be common to go into the carnival—Mary and Garr had said the boys and girls from school went into the races—she had not meant any wrong in keeping it a secret—she hadn't thought they'd be anything but pleased if she won, until Charlie—she'd wanted then to explain it to Aunt Maddy but Aunt Maddy had a headache and then—Carol had said——

Miss Amy interrupted her story now and then with: "Stuff and rubbish." When Janny stopped for lack of breath she patted her hand. "Now don't you care a fig about it! Of course you should have told your Aunt Maddy you were going into the thing, but it's all over now. They haven't bothered their heads giving you the good times young ones like, have they? Then they ought not to complain when you make your own."

"But what was so wrong about it?" Janny begged to know.

"Not a thing," declared Miss Amy cheerfully. "Not a thing—the way you and I look at it. That's it, you see, the way folks look at a thing. Some see things wrong and some don't. Now that was a nice contest and you wanted to go into it because you knew you could skate and you wanted to win it, of course, like any real girl would—and if you'd done it all behind the high fence of the Meadowbrook Club it'd been all right to your aunt's thinking. She was born and brought up a Morrison, and a Morrison believes when a lady does anything in public she isn't a lady. But we're not Morrisons and we know we can be ladies anywhere. I hold any one with a nice mind and a kind heart can be a lady no matter what she does or who her grandmother was, but Aunt Maddy doesn't. Goodness, *I* know how upset she was! I offended her once myself. I didn't like being dependent on Nicholas for every cent I had so I took a place in Flagg's store, in the toy department. But dearie me, the storm over it! Maddy said I was common. Yes, she said I was cheap, too, A com-

mon, cheap shop-girl. Those were her very words. I gave it up, though it was real jolly handling the cute toys and dolls and things and the other clerks were as nice and friendly as could be." Miss Amy sighed reminiscently. "There wasn't any use trying to make them understand, so I gave it up."

However, Miss Amy's simple philosophy, including as it did a mild pity for poor Aunt Maddy, born a Morrison, failed to clear Janny's bewilderment or ease her self-blame. "You didn't make Uncle Nicholas sick," she wailed, remembering that that was her immediate concern.

"Sick? What do you mean?"

"Oh, I shouldn't have spoken of it! He asked me not to. But I'm so afraid——"

Janny told, then, of finding Uncle Nicholas in physical distress alone in his study.

"Cousin Amy, do you think he was so angry with me that it made him sick—like that?"

Miss Amy dismissed such a probability with a "p-t-s-h," that sounded much like a cat spitting. She sprang up from her chair and began to run around the room, to the bureau, to the table, to the whatnot, moving a book here, a picture there, unconscious of so doing. Her scant bathrobe flapped behind her and her knit bed slippers made funny thudding sounds. Janny stared. She had never seen Miss Amy so agitated. Her round cheerful face was angry. Her little eyes were blazing.

"Of course you didn't make him sick. *They're* the

ones—all of them! Haven't I seen it going on—all this time? They drain him of everything. Like leeches. They drain him of sympathy and patience and money. It's have, have, have, all the time. And they're never satisfied. They always want a little more. And he's fool enough to think they ought to have it because they want it. And what do they give him? Oh, a kiss now and then—but that's not so much. I tell you, Janny, it hasn't been easy to sit quiet and not speak my mind at times. But they'll find out—they'll see, maybe, when he comes to the end of the rope. And by all the signs that won't be so long off."

Janny gasped. The "end of the rope" sounded appalling to her. "What do you mean?" she asked, fearfully.

"Well, they'll spend every cent Nicholas Bartley can scrape together and then they'll have to listen to him. Maybe they'll have to think of some one besides themselves, then."

"But Aunt Maddy is sick!"

"Sick! Stuff and rubbish." Miss Amy's face puckered in scorn. "She isn't any more sick than I am. She just thinks she is. She started it to get sympathy and it got to be a habit with her. It's a luxury lots of women enjoy. But you don't see your Mary Payne's mother indulging in it."

Then Miss Amy laughed at Janny's frightened face. "Don't look so scared, child. I've talked a lot more'n I ought to, but I do get so upset thinking how wrong things are going here. Nicholas Bartley's bought

everything with his money but peace of mind. And he don't see it. He don't see how they get around him, all of them. But put the idea out of your head that it was your little fun at the park made him sick. Stuff and rubbish! Like as not it was last month's bills or poor Kevin or some of Charlie's smart-aleckness. Most likely it was all of it put together. Sometimes I wish something would happen in this family to shake it up, shake some sense into it. Make them *all* see, maybe. Miss Eames used to tell over and over of a cousin of hers who was in that big earthquake out at San Francisco. She was blind as a bat before and didn't it shake the sight back into her! Maybe the age of miracles isn't over." And Miss Amy sat down again in her chair, hopefully, and wrapped her bathrobe over her knees.

Janny could not say a word. Miss Amy's grim forebodings made her feel that at the very moment the substantial walls around her were trembling in sudden upheaval. "The end of the rope." She shivered. Poor Uncle Nicholas. Poor blind Uncle Nicholas.

"Now we'd better get to bed and to sleep. It doesn't right things sitting up all night thinking about them. Generally in the morning they don't seem so bad, anyway. You get your nightie and crawl in with me," suggested Miss Amy, practically.

Janny was glad to do it. With Miss Amy close to her perhaps she would not feel so frightened.

Miss Amy fell asleep at once. Janny listened to her light breathing. She could not sleep. For one thing she could not shut from her mind the memory of her

uncle's tortured face. And then there was the calamity of the "end of the rope."

Janny had seen poverty in Painted Post, the stark poverty of empty stomachs. She had seen men come down from the mining country up the river, hungry, sullen-eyed, she had seen the tragedy of Mrs. Duggan left penniless with her three little ones after her husband had been shot in a brawl in a mining camp, she had seen old prospectors begging for scraps outside of the kitchen door of the Grand Hotel. But poverty had no complications in Painted Post; when a man was hungry he was fed, if a small stake might help him recoup his fortunes some one gave it to him, Mrs. Duggan was sent to her folks in the States, with money to spare in her pocket. No one in Painted Post practised charity with any consciousness of it as such. To them poverty was simply a run of bad luck and wealth was a kindlier smile of fortune; the lucky ones gave a hand to the unlucky ones with little ostentation and the superstitious belief that it was bread thrown upon the waters to return to them in double measure.

It could not be like that in Newton, however. By the strongest effort of her imagination Janny could not picture Uncle Nicholas or Aunt Maddy or Carol accepting any help from any one. She could not see any one carrying a "basket" to the front door of this house. Yet Miss Amy had spoken with disturbing conviction.

Little things flashed to Janny's mind, trivial at the time of their happening but significant now, Uncle

Nicholas frowning over Charlie's extravagances, over Carol's pleading for a car of her own. Only the week before they had talked of Carol's going abroad in June with the Merrys and staying on through the winter with Joe in a French school, but Janny remembered now that Uncle Nicholas had not said anything.

Miss Amy had said his money had bought everything but peace of mind. If he had more money—if he *knew* that he hadn't bought peace of mind—he might still buy it.

Miss Amy was sleeping soundly, her hands folded placidly over her flannel nightgown. Janny peeped at her. How could she sleep, untroubled, when she herself had said the end of the rope was so near?

Money! Janny frowned at the shadows on the wall. She had never thought of money in dollars and cents. It hadn't mattered at Doctor John's. He never had much, but he never worried about it. But then Painted Post was not like Newton.

She remembered her own allowance, which, each time her uncle gave it to her, seemed too much. She had almost ten dollars of it now. She would give it back to him, tell him she did not need any money. Ten dollars—why Carol had paid four times that for a dress just day before yesterday!

Then she remembered the little map of the lost mine still concealed in the wallet. She had scarcely thought of it for weeks and weeks. She sat bolt upright. Miss Amy reached out a hand and touched her. But Miss Amy did not waken.

Janny lay cautiously back on her pillow. Oh, where was Joe Primrose? Now, far from Painted Post, she could think that Joe was dead. And if he were dead she could give the map to her uncle. She could tell him that it was his.

The little slip of paper might lead the way to fabulous wealth—wealth that would be Uncle Nicholas', Carol's—— The end of the rope might be averted. With it Uncle Nicholas must buy peace of mind. Tomorrow—or very soon anyway—she would give it to him.

CHAPTER XVII

"NO ONE ELSE CARES"

VERY truly Miss Amy had spoken when she said things never seemed so bad in the morning.

Janny wakened late to wonder if everything of the night before had not been a bad dream. And as the day advanced she felt that it must have been.

Uncle Nicholas already was at the breakfast table. Aunt Maddy was down, too. The winter sun streamed in through the long windows of the bay, Celia shuffled in and out with steaming pancakes. Uncle Nicholas had spread out a part of the morning paper at his place and was reading aloud from it to Aunt Maddy. Charlie was eating an inordinate number of the pancakes and between mouthfuls exchanging sly banter with Carol. Miss Amy was her cheerful, twinkling self again.

No, it was the night that had made it all seem so bad!

Disaster could not come to such a house as this, Janny reasoned. The substantial old walls, the wide, orderly rooms, were bulwarks against it. It could not come to such as Uncle Nicholas, so reserved, so dignified, to Aunt Maddy and Carol, so obviously of a more delicate clay than ordinary folks. It couldn't.

The day passed with an even tenor that reassured Janny. Uncle Nicholas and Aunt Maddy and Carol went to church. Janny went with Miss Amy. Miss

Amy chirped through the hymns with an untroubled brow, but Janny watched Carol in the pew ahead. Carol wore a little green tight-fitting hat and the fur of her collar lay dark against the creamy smoothness of her cheek. She was so delicately pretty, lifting long lashes to smile at her father when they shared hymn book or prayer book, that she couldn't be—what had Miss Amy said?—a leech!

A friend of Uncle Nicholas' came to dinner. After dinner the family sat in the parlor and the men talked of weighty things—things happening at the Capitol in Washington, abroad, Uncle Nicholas talking in his clipped, even voice. Afterwards Carol played on the piano for them. Charlie sang, too, in a clear thin tenor. Aunt Maddy sat with them, gracious, smiling.

Covertly Janny watched her uncle's face for some sign of that physical distress he had suffered the night before. But she saw none.

No, it had seemed worse because she was tired, overwrought. Now she lost her panic in a mounting sense of relief.

As the days went by Miss Amy's grave forebodings retreated, like an army of shadows routed by clear light.

School interests filled Janny's mind. She found that her achievement at the carnival made her into something of a hero and she enjoyed it, enjoyed Mary's pride in her, and Garr's. She did not tell them what had happened at home.

A long letter had come from Doctor John. He did not write every week now, and now he did not write so

much about the little things at Painted Post. Mostly he commented on Janny's own letters. Perhaps in his wise understanding he was withdrawing, little by little, the old life from the girl, strengthening her interest in the new.

He had warned her to beware of "self-pity." "It's pleasant but it's dangerous. It's like a wall you build higher and higher around you until you cannot see over it." Janny had blushed when she read that. She had not known that she was feeling sorry for herself. In the next letter she wrote to Doctor John she deliberately told him she was very happy.

With Kevin's consent she had written to him about the marionettes, how she was helping Kevin with them, how cleverly he was working out the complicated system of strings and wires. And in this letter that had come Doctor John spoke of Kevin's work. "The boy must be very clever. What a joy such a show as his would be in little out-of-the-way corners like ours. It would bring a great deal of beauty to us. Cannot you see our good people crowded into the schoolhouse watching Rip Van Winkle or Cinderella or perhaps King Arthur and his Knights?——"

At once Janny's ready wings of fancy took flight. She saw Kevin, his "show" completed to his satisfaction, taking it to Painted Post, to other places scattered along the rim of the world. Perhaps Kevin would let her go with him to help. There was not much entertainment in Painted Post. Sometimes Doctor John and Mother Faire got up charades and pantomimes for the

younger people, even dances, when they danced polkas and reels and quadrilles, very infrequently a man brought a cinematograph and a screen from Stafford and showed Charlie Chaplin or Tom Mix. And sometimes, when prospectors came down the river to celebrate a run of luck, there were poker games in the back room of the Grand that lasted all night and dances down at Toby Jarden's that were not like the other dances and that made the night hideous with raucous laughter and loud quarrelling. Always after one of these Doctor John had gone about with grave face.

Janny tucked the letter into her pocket and went in search of Kevin. She wanted him to know what Doctor John had said about the little dolls, talk about her plan. Janny had seen little of the boy since examinations. She knew he was not working with his marionettes. More than once, coming home from school, she had looked at the barn for the little spiral of smoke from the makeshift chimney, even peeped in through the door, but each time found the place deserted. She had missed working with the dolls and missed the friendly talks with Kevin, though, to be sure, she always did most of the talking. She had felt vaguely that something was amiss with Kevin, suspected it from an added sullenness in his manner, but she had not dared to question him.

She found him now in the kitchen. He wore an old sweater and heavy shoes. Celia was making sandwiches.

"Oh, Kevin, where are you going?"

"Hiking," Kevin answered briefly, not looking at Janny.

"Alone? I wish I could go with you."

"I'm going out in the country."

Country—that meant open spaces, away from streets and houses. Janny wanted to go very much.

"I'm going to walk for miles."

"But I can walk as far as you can, Kevin. You'll see that I can. Celia will put in an extra sandwich for me. Oh, please let me go with you. Saturdays are so stupid. Anyway, I've got something to tell you."

Kevin was not won by that—he may have suspected "preaching"—but the tone of Janny's voice betrayed how very stupid Saturdays could be for her. None too graciously he said she could go if she wanted to.

They followed Maple Avenue until they reached the city limits. Then they struck off into a country road toward the hills. It wound past farmhouses, quiet now in the winter inactivity; now and then they met a farmer driving a horse and sleigh or an intrepid Ford owner, but for the most part they seemed alone in a great white silent world. In the sunshine there was a deceiving hint of thaw, of a stirring and awakening beneath the crust of snow. Janny tramped sturdily, shoulder to shoulder with Kevin. She did not talk—she did not want to talk. She was revelling in a delicious sense of escape from all the perplexities of her uncle's house. She wondered if Kevin felt that way. Perhaps that was why he liked to go off on these long hikes. Why hadn't she done it before?

Gradually Kevin relented to her company. She certainly knew how to walk, he conceded briefly. She didn't keep up a lot of gabbing, either.

They came upon little dark streams of water tumbling through twisting channels of ice and snow. They threw snowballs to break the thin ice in the ditches. Once they startled a quail from the gray, bare thicket. They watched a flock of crows flying toward the woodland. They were in the hills now; Newton was out of sight. They leaned on the railing of a wooden bridge and ate their sandwiches.

Then Janny read to Kevin what Doctor John had written. "You see he thinks the marionettes are fine, Kevin." She said it proudly. "And some day—when they're finished—you can take them to Painted Post and give a show. You can go to lots of places like Painted Post." She echoed Doctor John's word that such places had need of what Kevin could offer them. She described the long evenings of the long winters in the North country. She told of the play the school children had given last winter, which Doctor John had coached. Every one had enjoyed it so much. She talked very fast, eager for Kevin to see what Doctor John meant.

She knew Kevin was listening intently. Peeping sidewise at him, she saw his eyes kindle, then saw the light die quickly from them. He had turned his head a little away from her. But he did not interrupt her. And he did listen.

But when he turned back to her he was scowling.

"That sounds fine—but I'm through. Dad says if he catches me fussing with the marionettes he'll burn them."

Janny protested that with a quick indrawing of her breath.

"He says I'm wasting my time with them," Kevin went on bitterly. "Seems as if whatever a fellow likes to do is always wasting time. I'd just got that switchboard fixed and with a heavier battery I know it would work! And then I was going to rig up a set of keys——" Kevin stopped abruptly. He had been rolling a hard snowball and now he threw it with violent strength at the trunk of a tree. It struck the tree, broke into fragments of crystal. "So that's that." And Kevin laughed, a laugh that rang bitter on his boy's lips.

"Oh, but, Kevin—your father'd see that the marionettes are wonderful if you'd *show* him——"

"He won't look at them."

"He would—if you'd work in school."

Kevin shot her a warning glance. So she *was* going to preach! He set his lips in a stubborn line.

Janny caught the quick look but she plunged on. She spoke with spirit. "You could get that Cicero, Kevin, if you stopped thinking how you hated it and how useless it was. And wouldn't it be worth while getting it if it—it pleased your father so that he'd believe—about the marionettes—that they were worth while?"

"I guess he's past believing anything's worth while I do——"

"Oh, Kevin," Janny expostulated. She did not know how to cope with this mood. Suddenly she remembered what Doctor John had written about the wall of self-pity. Kevin was building one, too. He felt so sorry for himself, so abused, that he couldn't see over the wall.

"But it's cowardly not to *try* to make him believe! I think the marionettes are fine and so do you and so does Doctor John, so isn't it worth making your father see it, too? Doctor John says anything that's a lot of trouble to get is worth that much more to you." She sighed. "I wish Doctor John could talk to you!"

"I'm sick of talking," Kevin sneered. "I get more'n my share, I think."

Now impatience completely overcame Janny's sympathy. She measured the well-built strong length of the boy as he walked a pace or two ahead of her. His head was bent and his shoulders slouched. She had a wild desire to shake him straight. He *was* a coward, not to tackle the despised Cicero as any one should who faced a thing that had to be done. She thought of Garrett Payne. *He* didn't walk with his nose to the ground!

In silence they climbed a long rise in the road and at the top they paused for breath. Far off over the snowy fields lay the horizon, faintly pink, fringed with clouds piled like the shadowy parapets of a dream city. A wind had sprung up and Janny leaned into it, her pulses stirring to its cold sting. For the moment she forgot Kevin, forgot everything but that impelling sense of stir within her, like the answer to some chal-

lenge from that life that lay ahead, hidden, just as a part of the world lay hidden beyond that cloud-tipped horizon. It was a high moment, immeasurable as a space of time, keyed with tremulous living. When Kevin, behind her, said that they'd better be starting back, she did not heed him at once—as if his injunction really had nothing to do with her.

Reluctantly she ran after him to overtake him. She did not want to talk now. She did not want even to think of Kevin and his difficulties.

After a little he turned to her abruptly. "You're a funny kid, Janny," he said, as Garrett Payne once had said. He spoke gruffly, but there was a wistful smile in his eyes. "I mean it's funny for you to care what I do. No one else does."

Janny did not answer, for Kevin, awkwardly, boyishly, had betrayed a loneliness that made her heart go out to him in a little rush of understanding. But she could find no words for her pity. All she could think was "poor Kevin" and that was not enough. So she let him stalk on a little ahead and she followed, shyly.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN IDOL FALLS

BECAUSE school offered an outlet for enthusiasms upon which no Aunt Maddy could frown or a Carol sneer, Janny more and more threw her whole heart into its life.

She had a place—inconspicuous, to be sure, except for the few days following the carnival—in the educational machine that moved to gongs. At the sound of the gongs she shuttled with the others from study room to classroom to study room. She knew the school language of shrill italics, vivid slang, extravagant hyperbole; she talked it as the others did, filing along the corridors, outside of classroom doors, dallying in the locker room. Now her gym middy was covered, too, with names and initials and caricatures. She had been invited to join the Psi Omega, though, with Aunt Maddy's repeated warning in mind, she had refused the invitation regretfully.

Her school's honor was hers. Its laurels she wore consciously if figuratively on her own brow; any peril that threatened its fair name threatened her, Janny Bartley.

She knew what the basketball game with St. David's meant to Newton High. If Newton won this game it would get the Middle State High School Basketball Championship. Janny joined in the burning speculation

over the game. The Newton High team had won every game so far this year—but then, alas, St. David's had not been beaten either! And on every side, she heard that Charlie was the best basketball player in the school.

She knew that the time for the awarding of the Westhampton College Scholarship was drawing near. This was given each year by the alumni of Westhampton College to the Senior boy who over the four years had offered most to the school life in scholarship, athletics, and school spirit. The award gave free tuition throughout the college course. Janny thought it a very fine thing to win. The girls talked about it with as much interest as if one of their sex had a chance to win it. Repeatedly Janny heard Charlie's name mentioned as the fortunate fellow. When she asked Mary if she thought Charlie had a chance, Mary had said: "Oh, I guess he has a good one. He's always been on the football team and the basketball team, too. And he's popular. He makes every one like him."

But there was a suggestion of something unsaid that made Janny look questioningly at Mary, and Mary explained. "He *makes* the boys like him—but I don't think he gives a hang for any one or anything in the school. It's that kind of popularity. He has his own little clique—the high-hat crowd. Garr doesn't think much of them."

Janny asked if Garr had any chance.

"Not against Charlie Bartley's kind." And Mary set her lips in a straight line.

But Janny was too happy thinking of Charlie's win-

ning the Award to defend him against Mary's thinly veiled contempt. Of course handsome, gay Charlie was a hero with the boys and girls in the school. It could not be otherwise. And it was to be expected that he would limit his friends to a select few—any one living in the Bartley circle, even as short a time as she had, would understand that, better perhaps than Mary and Garr.

When Janny spoke at home of the Award, her eyes on Charlie, Charlie laughed. "Oh, *that* thing!" And Janny only thought him modest in wanting to make the honor seem like nothing when he was so likely to win it.

In the talk at school Janny came to understand that the winning of the Award depended in a measure upon the game with St. David's. If the team carried the school to victory any player on it had that much better chance to win the Award. Charlie, she thought, with a tingling of pride that she belonged to Charlie even in the uncertain ties of cousinship.

The team went into "training" for the game. They took it very seriously. Garr explained that he, though he was only a "sub," could not eat certain things. At school the players ate lunch at a training table, filing up together, conscious that the admiring, anxious, appraising eyes of the school were upon them.

Janny knew that, away from school at least, Charlie disregarded the training rules. He laughed at them. "I was strong for all that when I was a freshman," he explained loftily. He smoked a great many cigarettes.

He did not go to bed early. But Janny had faith in his superability. Perhaps he did not need to train as the others did. He spoke of the game with such easy assurance of winning. That St. David's crowd was a bunch of sissies, parlor pets. You could walk away with them, he said.

But as the day of the game drew nearer disturbing rumors reached Janny's ears. The gymnasium coach, popularly known as "Sock'em," had called Charlie "soft" before all the others on the team, had warned him that he might be dropped if he wasn't careful. The story swept the length and breadth of the school building.

The evening before the game Carol asked Charlie to take her to the Cinderella dance. This was one of a series of dances given at the Meadowbrook Club for the young people of the club membership. Merton Baggs, who had asked to escort her, had come down with chicken-pox. Janny's eyes beseeched Charlie to refuse, to remember the game. She ventured to remind him: "Oh, Charlie, the game's to-morrow."

"Don't you suppose I know that, goose?" he answered with a carelessness that rebuked Janny. For a moment she wondered if Charlie did not feel about that game as she did, as those other boys and girls did who talked of it with such grim determination that Newton must win. And didn't he know that the Award might depend upon what he did in that game? But Charlie was so undisturbed that her confidence wavered only a brief moment.

Janny went to the game with Kevin. At the school she left him and joined Mary and some of the other Junior girls. They all carried pennants of blue and gold, the school colors, and wore blue and gold ribbons on their sleeves.

Janny had not gone to any of the school games. She was tremendously excited, felt hot and cold in turn, dry-mouthed, trembly. She glanced over to where Carol sat, surrounded by girls and boys of her set. They wore no colors and appeared unmoved by the significance of the event.

The St. David's team filed out amid lusty cheering from the adherents of the neighboring school, who had journeyed in a body to Newton for the game. The Newton bleachers cheered them, too. Janny thought that very sporting. They were followed by the Newton team, Charlie in the lead, and a great cheer lifted for them, in which Janny tried to join, but found she could make no sound. Charlie was smiling, talking confidently to the player behind him. She watched him proudly.

Garr came out quietly and took a place on a side bench. He was frowning with intentness. He glanced toward the spectators, singled Mary and Janny out and waved to them, but he did not smile.

"I don't want any one to get hurt—but I wish Garr could have a chance——" sighed Mary.

The school band was playing with great dissonance of the brasses and an Amazon trumpeting of the drums. The Newton boys and girls were outsounding the gallant band in their racket. St. David's crowd was cheer-

ing, too. Janny felt her throat tighten, felt shivers staccato down her spine. She sat forward on her seat, her hand clutching Mary's.

As the game began a silence fell that seemed more deafening than the blare of horns or yelling. Janny followed the scoring only by Mary's exclamations. St. David's won a point—two points. She looked at Charlie. He was still smiling. His fair hair, rumpled now, looked like a mop of gold. Then she saw the ball slip out of his hands, heard some one call shrilly: "Hey, there, Bart, put glue on your mitts." Long hard-muscled bodies flashed from one end of the court to the other. Sometimes Janny could not make out which players were the enemies——

When a whistle blew sharply Mary sank back in her seat with a wail of disgust.

"St. David's 19. Newton 0——" an official was writing on a big score board.

"Oh, well, that's only one quarter," said Mary grimly.

A boy had slipped into a seat in front of the girls. He leaned to his neighbor. "Say, Bartley got bawled out for fair before the game. He didn't show up for practice yesterday." "Old Sock'em will show him the gate and serve him right," the other boy snorted.

Janny sat puzzled, torn with apprehension. What did they mean by "the gate"?

The second quarter began. There was no concerted cheering now. Occasionally some one from the bleachers shrilled some word of encouragement or derision,

but for the most part there was no sound except the rapid pad-pad of the players' shoes, a heavy breathing, the swat of the ball striking hard palms.

Back and forth the players raced—arms upflung, jowls hanging loosely, sweat glistening where the skin rippled with the twist and turn of hard muscles.

Janny tingled with the desire to throw her own strong young body into the fray. She fought in spirit with those boys in the Newton blue until her breath came short and her body ached as if literally she were struggling with them.

Her eyes clung on Charlie. He was not smiling now. His face was very red, his underlip was outthrust. She had never seen Charlie look like that. But he was fighting, she said to herself—oh, he was fighting gallantly——

But at that moment the whistle blew. A boy from the Newton side hissed. Another boy cried: "Shut up."

"What is it?" Janny asked Mary.

"A foul. Charlie Bartley made a foul. A free throw for the St. David's——"

Janny dropped Mary's hand. She sat straight, two bright spots of color on her cheeks. Charlie could not have *meant* to foul——

Now there was desperation in the Newton team's play. There was desperation in the Newton bleachers. It showed in straining, imploring eyes, taut bodies thrust forward.

The whistle blew again, shrilly. Again came a hiss-

ing from the Newton bleachers and now no one rebuked it.

"Charlie Bartley acts like he was *throwing* the game——" wailed a girl back of Janny.

Janny saw Sock'em go to the side-lines with the Newton captain, where they whispered together for a moment. Then Sock'em crooked his finger at Garrett Payne. Mary moved forward with an audible exclamation. Janny saw the captain speak to Charlie, saw Charlie move over to the bench.

A great cheer burst for Payne. "Payne! Payne! Payne! Show 'em. Step on 'em." The Newton adherents were riotous. With one voice they dumped their anxiety, their fearful apprehension, upon Garr's broad shoulders. And in all the tumult there was not one word for poor Charlie.

Janny sat very still, a little cold. There must be some mistake somewhere. That Sock'em—she thought him a horrid man—had misunderstood what Charlie was trying to do. With miserable eyes she watched Charlie stalk out of the room.

Suddenly Mary leaped to her feet. Garr had made a basket! It happened so swiftly, so unexpectedly, that the St. David's crowd gasped audibly. Then a roar from the Newton side let loose that made the walls of the room tremble. "Payne! Payne! Payne!" The whistle blew for the end of the second quarter. The band struck up a school song, the bleachers took up the chorus.

Janny and Mary did not talk. Janny was glad Garr

had made that basket but she still grieved for Charlie. Mary's eyes were black with excitement, the glow of them lighted her serious face.

In the third quarter the Newton team seemed to have taken new life. Steadily they piled up a score. The cheering was incessant and always "Payne! Payne!" By the end of the third quarter the game was tied. Now apprehension lay heavily on the St. David's men. The Newton boys and girls were in a frenzy. Already they tasted victory. Garrett Payne was their hero. He had saved the school from ignominious defeat. Even Janny felt the excitement, forgot poor Charlie, thrilled to the sight of Garr. He was splendid. She thought he looked like a young Greek athlete. His jaw was set stubbornly, he was still frowning, a lock of dark hair lay wet on his forehead.

The game finished with a triumph for Newton High. Boys and girls alike scrambled down from the bleachers, tumbling on one another in their eagerness to reach Garrett Payne.

Janny, turning to Mary, caught her furtively wiping tears from her eyes. "I can't help it," she laughed. "It means so much to Garr!" She sobered. "You needn't care about Charlie, Janny. It will do him good. He is too conceited. I think things always have come too easily to him."

Janny did not dispute that. She could not. She knew what Mary had said was true. But she felt sorry for Charlie.

She did not see him until the next morning. She

dreaded seeing him. She went down late for breakfast, hoping he might have gone. But Charlie and Carol and Kevin were there, talking about the game.

"It was a frame-up," Charlie was saying. "That Payne chap's been licking Sock'em's shoes all winter."

"Why didn't you say so right then and there?" demanded Carol hotly. "I'd have told them what I thought of a thing like that. We all—my crowd—said there was something very funny about it."

"Who cares?" laughed Charlie. "I'm sure I don't." But his laugh had little mirth in it and his eyes were angry.

Janny did not join in their talk. She knew that Charlie was hiding under a flimsy excuse and she was ashamed for him. She didn't think Garr had been "licking Sock'em's shoes." That wasn't like Garr.

"Do you think it will make any difference with the Award?" she did manage to ask.

"Huh! Let them give it to any one they want to. Nobody in my crowd would go to a hick college like that, anyway. We don't need charity."

At school no one talked of anything but the game and of Garrett's part in it. He had won the basketball championship for the school. Garrett accepted his glory modestly. "Oh, don't make such a racket. I didn't do it alone," Janny heard him protest to a circle of noisy worshippers.

The following week the upper classes of the school voted on a candidate for the Award. Janny wrote Garr's name bravely, a little sadly. She wanted to write Charlie's but she knew he did not merit it. The faculty

met to pass upon the records of the four boys winning the highest number of votes. Then on Friday the school assembled to hear the Award. Some of the local alumni of Westhampton College sat on the platform with Mr. Miles. They were older men and smiled benevolently down on the rows of boys and girls and covertly looked at their watches. Mr. Miles wore his black broadcloth morning coat to signify that he recognized this as an important day in the school history. Westhampton colors and the Newton High School colors were draped about the platform. There were speeches—a long speech by Mr. Miles in which he lauded colleges in general and Westhampton in particular, shorter speeches by the old sons of Westhampton, in which they told of the advantages of their college and the aim of the local alumni in sending to its Alma Mater from Newton young men who would carry on the traditions for which Westhampton peculiarly stood. They spoke a little vaguely of these traditions, as if time had blurred them a little, but they were none the less fervent and they let their voices vibrate with deep feeling to emphasize their undying loyalty.

Some of the girls were a little restive, for the excitement of the Award concerned them only vicariously, but Janny listened intently. College! She had not known it was like that, that it was something men cared so much about even when they were old. These men of Westhampton made her see the ivy-clad walls of which they spoke, they made her hear the college chimes. There was something more to college than what one learned in the classes, something that lasted——

Presently Mr. Miles rose again and with much unction announced that by vote of the upper classes and the faculty the Award went to Garrett Payne, for scholarship and school service. Every one had expected this, but every one shouted as if it had come as a tremendous surprise.

After all—Garr needed it and Charlie didn't, Janny reasoned over her disappointment. And Garr *had* been splendid.

Janny did not have an opportunity to congratulate Garr until after school, when he joined her and Mary as they were walking home together. Janny was a little shy before his new dignity.

Garr thanked her. "I'm pleased, of course," he said simply. "I didn't think I had a chance." Then his mouth settled into the sober line of lips so like Mary's. "But I don't know about it. I'm wondering if I ought to take it. Tuition is the least of the expenses at college. And I was planning to get a job the minute I got through in June. It would be easier to give it up now than later."

Janny, remembering the speaker's eloquence over ivied walls and mellow chimes, felt very sorry for Garr. Like Mary he must shut his dreams behind tight-locked lips, sober eyes. *He* did not call Westhampton a "hick" college or talk about charity. And Garr, in Charlie's place, would not have hidden his own mistakes under the flimsy charge of a "frame-up."

Janny sighed, as loyal hearts must always sigh for the frailties of fallen idols.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PARTY

CAROL was going to have a party.

To Janny it grew in importance as she listened to the discussion over it. Mrs. Bartley and Carol wanted to have it at the Meadowbrook Club, but Nicholas Bartley frowned on that. He declared it poor taste in his opinion to go outside of the home to entertain one's friends, and he stood firm against Carol's charges that he was ridiculously old-fashioned. There was discussion over the invitations, the decorations, the music, caterers. Janny listened with amazement, also with a strengthened reassurance that things could not be as bad as Miss Amy had predicted. No one with the "end of the rope" threatening would plan a party! And *such* a party.

Carol and her mother spent hours over what Carol called her "lists." It appeared that it was very necessary to invite just the right people. Janny saw Carol draw her pencil quite calmly through the names of some of the girls she knew quite well. She didn't "owe" them anything, and for various reasons they weren't likely ever to give a party. Others were not popular—the boys were sure to get "stuck" with them, whatever that was. Carol was firm in not wanting too many girls. "Just the Cinderella crowd, Mamma, and maybe——" Then she'd add a name or two that she and her mother considered eligible and profitable. For

a while Janny had thought of asking for an invitation for Mary, but she changed her mind when she came to know the feeling behind these invitations.

At first she did not know whether or not she was to come to the party. She did not know until she heard Carol and Charlie figuring on the dancing space, a little crossly, for Carol had not conceded graciously to having the party at home. "It's going to be horribly crowded," Carol sighed. "Of course Janny doesn't dance, and Kevin won't, so there'll be two less, anyway."

Miss Amy had made over one of Carol's dresses for Janny. Janny hung it in her wardrobe under an old sheet, and now and then she lifted the sheet and peeped at it in a breathless incredulity. It couldn't be hers—that soft shimmery thing of pink, the color of a rose.

With a little superiority Janny compared this party to the parties she had attended in Painted Post. Those had been merry, to be sure, with singing and the twang of instruments in calloused fingers, with loud laughter and harmless boistering; there had been reels and square dances, with a whirling at the corners that shook the walls; but there had been no decorator, no caterer, no "lists" of bidden guests, no fairy dress waiting.

Janny watched the men from Bowles Florist Shop transform the dignified rooms of the house into a veritable fairyland of trailing vines and flowers imported from the South, with cunningly contrived lights among them. Palms were grouped in corners and before the dark wood mantels. In the kitchen the "caterer"

already was holding sway, to Celia's irritation, unpacking boxes and baskets. Miss Amy was counting plates and cups and knives and forks. It was with reluctance Janny tore herself away, even to put on the lovely dress.

The family had eaten supper at five o'clock so that the kitchen might be cleared for the caterer. They had gulped it down hurriedly. Carol had looked tired, a little distraught. "Did every one think the house looked all right? Oh, what if the eight-o'clock train was late." This train was bringing the Yankee Boys, an orchestra from Binghamton. She thought of countless other things that might spoil the party, had to be reassured over and over. "*Would* Kevin act decent?" Janny heard her ask. And: "Mother, Cousin Amy *won't* stick around the front part of the house, will she?"

Nicholas Bartley had eaten dinner down-town. Janny had heard Charlie take the message at the telephone.

Janny made a ceremony of dressing. She arranged her hair in a fashion Mary had taught her. First she brushed it, then she fluffed it with her fingers, divided it into two equal parts and secured each of these to the nape of her neck with innumerable hairpins. She felt that she fairly bristled with the hairpins, but she liked the sensation. She liked the face in her mirror. It couldn't be Janny Bartley—not to-night—so she admired it without reserve. She needed none of those artifices the older girls at school carried around with them—a soft color dyed her cheeks, her eyes shone like stars.

She put on the made-over dress slowly so as to make the sensation last longer. She wanted to kiss it—only that would be too absurd a thing for a girl to do who had her hair up! She did lay her cheek against it.

Miss Amy tapped on her door. "Can I help you?" Miss Amy wore a long apron over her best dress. She was as excited as if she were going to be at the front part of the party.

"Do I look all right?" begged Janny.

"You look lovely, dear. But——" Miss Amy walked around her. "You look so grown-up! I miss the little girl."

"It's almost time I did grow up. The girls at school laugh at my wearing my hair in braids—as old as I am! Mary showed me how to do it. Doesn't it look nice?"

But Miss Amy was not looking particularly at the dusky hair curling softly away from Janny's face.

"You *have* been growing up, I guess, Janny, here—this winter. Without our realizing it." Miss Amy spoke seriously and Janny sobered.

"I suppose I have."

"It hasn't been all happiness, child—*I* know. But then——" Miss Amy brightened. "Goodness me, we can't expect *always* to be happy. There *have* to be growing-pains."

Janny laughed. At the risk of the precious dress she threw her arms around Miss Amy's neck and hugged her.

"There'd have been more—lots more—if it hadn't been for you, Cousin Amy!"

Miss Amy pushed Janny gently away. "That's nice in you to say that. But now you must go down to your party. You're going to have a good time, I know—and you'll look as pretty as the prettiest one there." She fussed a little, straightening a fold in the dress here and there, and Janny saw her blinking her eyes as if there might be tears behind them. Suddenly Janny wished she had kissed Cousin Amy more often—she wished very much that Cousin Amy were going to have a good time at the party instead of only counting plates and cups and forks behind the kitchen door.

As Janny went through the hall she heard Uncle Nicholas talking in Aunt Maddy's room. Something in the tone of his voice brought her to an abrupt halt. Then she hurried on for she did not want to hear what he was saying. But his voice had been so much more tired than usual!

Calamity could not come now! Not *now*. She realized she was trembling.

But as she walked through the cleared rooms below her fear left her. The house looked so beautiful, indeed, like a magic fairyland. Charlie and Carol were talking to the orchestra leader. Charlie looked very handsome in his evening clothes. Carol, in yellow chiffon, appeared like a gay butterfly caught for the time in this fairy place.

Janny did not care that they did not notice her or tell her how nice she looked. She tiptoed softly from room to room, held by her own imaginings.

"Why, I've had fun enough already for one per-

son," she sighed, blissfully. She thought she would be content to sit very still the rest of the evening in some green corner and watch, just watch.

She sought her corner near the palm-screened mantel and watched the young people arrive. She knew some of the girls by name; some of the boys went to High—Charlie's "crowd." They greeted Aunt Maddy and Carol and Uncle Nicholas with such an easy manner. *They* were not in the least awed that Aunt Maddy looked "every inch a Morrison" in her black velvet dress and pearls or by Uncle Nicholas' grave face. They fell into little groups, chatting and laughing.

When the orchestra began to play Janny felt that the magic was complete. She kept time to it with her feet. She swayed ever so little to the rhythm.

But after a while she longed to dance. The music was like the wind. She'd like to get up and dance alone. She laughed softly, wondering what Carol would say if she did that—just moved with the music.

Carol was dancing with a tall dark boy whom Janny had not seen before. She thought he must be Stuart Goodwin, Joe Merry's cousin from New York. Janny had heard Carol talking about him. Carol was laughing up at him, her pretty head thrown a little back. Janny wondered what the boy had said to make Carol laugh. Carol looked so happy. And just then some other boy claimed her and danced away with her and Janny saw the tall stranger go to the side of the room.

"I wish he'd dance with me." Janny sighed, then

blushed, for she thought she had spoken her desire aloud.

The boys who were not dancing stood in a line across the end of the room. As late arrivals came in the line grew. Now and then a boy stepped out to claim a partner, but immediately another took his place. And presently this formation, like a long pigtail, crowded down on Janny in her corner, almost shutting her in.

Stuart Goodwin, taking his place at the end of the queue, stepped backward to dodge a dancing couple and trod on Janny's toes. He turned with an immediate apology. "Oh—I beg your pardon!" Then he stared at Janny. "Why, hullo, Cinderella. Why aren't you dancing?"

Janny stammered in her confusion. He was reaching out his hand. "Come on and dance—until your Prince comes." She rose, her face scarlet. He swung her out upon the floor. She felt a little giddy, frightened. But her feet at once caught the measure of the music. Stuart Goodwin, practised in the art, led her easily. He was talking gaily.

"Whoever left you in that corner? You're not a crasher, are you? Did I meet you? I couldn't have—I wouldn't forget any one like you. You can dance, Cinders, even if this is your first party!"

Carol whirled by them. Janny caught a glimpse of her astonished eyes. She threw back her head and laughed up at her partner as Carol had laughed. Oh, she wanted to dance forever! She wished Mary could see her pupil.

Charlie moved into the crowd and tapped Stuart Goodwin on the shoulder. But Stuart shook him off. "You're not the Prince, Bartley," he said and danced Janny away. Now Janny's heart beat so loudly that she thought every one must hear it above the tum-tum of the music.

When the orchestra stopped Stuart Goodwin led her toward the hall. "Come on, we'll find something to eat," he said, imperiously. "I always believe in hunting up the chow before the pack gets started."

Janny went with him to the dining room, where small tables were ready for serving supper. She'd rather dance but she did not venture to say so. Suddenly she felt very shy. Another boy and girl were sitting at one of the tables. The girl beckoned gaily to Stuart Goodwin to join them.

"If we sit here long enough some one will bring us something to eat," the girl explained, laughing up at Stuart. She bothered only to slide a fleeting smile Janny's way.

Janny did not join in their chatter. She felt uneasy. Perhaps she ought not to have come out for supper like this, before any of the others. She did not know the girl. Her partner called her "Midge" and Stuart Goodwin took up the name without formality of introduction. They laughed a great deal. Midge had made a funny rabbit out of her napkin and she wagged its ears archly in Stuart Goodwin's face.

"Don't you hate a house dance?" she asked Stuart. "It's always so crowded and I get depressed trying to

be myself with a lot of pious ancestors looking down on me." The boys laughed at her as if she had said something very clever.

They talked of the music. "I've heard worse," Stuart Goodwin offered with condescending generosity.

"Carol's putting it on thick," Midge sneered.

"Who are these people, anyway?" Stuart queried, flicking the ash from his cigarette to the floor. "Joe told me but I didn't pay much attention." Plainly he wanted Midge and Janny to think he had been dragged against his will to this "small town" affair.

Midge laughed. "Oh, didn't Joe tell you it was one of our first families? I guess it's number one. Hence the ancestors. But I'll tell you something. It's awfully exciting—sort of that Nero fiddling while Rome burns stuff. I heard my dad say to-night that Mr. Bartley had gone smash. He put a lot of money in those new apartment houses out on Winslow Heights and they've gone into the hands of a receiver—whatever that is. Carol talks big about going abroad with Joe next summer, but when I told Dad that he laughed and said if she went anywhere he guessed it would be to work."

A sharp fear smote Janny. She began to shake, go sick within her. She stood up quickly. "I—I don't want anything to eat," she stammered when the others turned to her in astonishment. She caught the edge of the table for support. She looked down at the three upturned faces with a wave of disgust, anger. "I—I wouldn't eat with you even if I were hungry. I'm Carol Bartley's cousin and I think you're horrid to talk like

that at her party. *She* wouldn't do a thing like that!" Then Janny stalked off, her head high. She heard a muffled exclamation from Midge, followed by a laugh.

Not until she reached her own room did she give way to her panic. The "end of the rope" had come, come—*now*—with all the laughter, the music, the magic green and the flowers! She had not believed it could come. And it had come.

Oh, why hadn't she given Uncle Nicholas the map of the mine—as she had planned? Then this disaster might have been averted.

She thought of Aunt Maddy below, gracious, smiling. She thought of Carol, so like a golden butterfly. With a twinge of her heart she remembered Uncle Nicholas' voice, heavy with weariness.

She'd take the map at once to him—now. He must have it before another minute passed. She took it from the wallet and rushed down the stairs. She paid no attention to the dancers, dodged in and out among them. Uncle Nicholas was not in the living room. She hurried to the study. It was crowded with young people. Uncle Nicholas was not there.

In the hall Mrs. Bartley caught her arm. "What in the world are you wandering around like this for, Janny?" she demanded in a displeased voice. "Go and find Amy and help her, if you're not dancing."

Rebuked, Janny mounted the stairs again. She went to her uncle's door. He must be there. The lifting music beat hideously, now, on her ears. Her heart was a leaden thing, where it had been so light.

She heard some one moving in the room. She knocked on the closed door. When no answer came to her knock she opened the door.

Her uncle was pacing the room, his hands locked behind him. He wore a lounging robe over his evening clothes. His face was gray and his eyes burned with some great anger. He confronted Janny, glaring at her.

"Tell your aunt she must excuse me to the guests. I will not go down."

"But—but, Uncle Nicholas——" Janny began, faltering before the anger in his eyes. "I——"

"I tell you I will not go down. I will not talk to any one to-night. Not to any one! Go, I say——" He pointed to the door.

Janny withdrew, frightened. Mechanically she retraced her way downstairs and delivered her uncle's message to Aunt Maddy. She saw Aunt Maddy smile a little, as if in scorn of her husband's mood.

She went back to her room. She took off the party dress. It was hateful to her now—garish, mocking, in the face of what was going to happen. Smash! That horrid Midge had spoken of it that way.

Where was Kevin? It would be some comfort to talk to him, or to Miss Amy.

She threw herself on to her bed and pulled the comforter up over her ears to muffle the sound of the music. Oh, if they'd only go home! If this night would only end. To-morrow Uncle Nicholas would listen to her—

or perhaps even to-night, when it was all over, she could go to him again——

For a long time she lay rigid, vainly fighting her growing alarm. But she could not endure it. She rose, stiffly, scarcely knowing what she planned to do. Find Miss Amy, perhaps——

Her eyes caught sight of a folded sheet of paper thrust under her door. She opened it. It was scrawled over in Kevin's uneven hand.

"I'm going. I won't stick things any longer. Dad went too far. He smashed the whole outfit. He caught me working on it in the barn. I had to try out something. I don't think it was wasting my time any more than as if I'd been in the house dancing with a lot of yapping girls. But he got mad. I guess you won't have any more use for me, but maybe you'll see it differently from the rest of them. Anyway, I'm going to find the world's rim like we talked about that day you read me those verses. Nobody knows I'm going, but you've been such a good sport I wanted to say good-by to you."

CHAPTER XX

IN THE NIGHT

For several moments Janny stared stupidly at the sheet of paper. Then she realized she was shaking violently, so violently that the paper shook, too.

Kevin had run away! "I'll run away—like your father did." She heard him saying it, as he had said it in the barn.

Oh, she should have foreseen it—his restlessness, his moodiness, his increasing silence. She should have foreseen just this that had happened and prevented it, in some way. She could have found a way—Kevin would listen to her when he wouldn't listen to any one else.

But she had neglected poor Kevin for all her own interests, paltry little school interests that didn't amount to anything beside this colossal happening.

A burst of music brought her sharply to the moment's need. She must tell some one at once. She dressed quickly, slipping into her school dress. She would find Miss Amy.

Miss Amy was still at her post in the kitchen. Now she was stacking the plates and cups which the caterer's assistant had washed clean. She looked very tired and small. At sight of Janny she dropped a dish with a little clatter.

"Why, child——"

Janny put Kevin's note in her hand. She did not say a word—she could not. She watched Miss Amy's face as she read what Kevin had written. Miss Amy's mouth drew up into a round pucker.

Then, to Janny's amazement, Miss Amy put the note into the pocket of her apron. "Let the boy get a good start. Maybe it'll teach him something he didn't learn in school. And maybe it'll teach Nicholas Bartley something, too."

"Oh, but, Miss Cousin Amy——" protested Janny.

Mechanically Miss Amy counted a stack of delicate Wode cups. "One. Two. Three——" But she did it in a queer dry voice. "We can't upset folks while the party's going on," she answered Janny crossly. "Your Aunt Maddy wouldn't thank us for a scene, even if she never laid eyes on Kevin again." At Janny's shocked face she gave her a little push. "Go, watch through the door and tell me when they're all gone. Then I'll go find Nicholas."

The swing door gave view through the dining room to the front hall. The latter was filled with departing guests. They were chattering around Carol, laughing a great deal. Presently Janny saw the musicians file out, their instruments in black cases like so many tools. She saw Aunt Maddy, tall and queenly in her black velvet and the pearls about her slender white throat—poor Aunt Maddy! Janny felt a pang at her heart.

The heavy odor of wilting flowers mingling with the vitiated air of the overcrowded rooms assailed Janny's nostrils, sickening her. Carol's happy voice

calling out to some one, high above the laughter, stabbed through her. Poor Carol—so like a golden butterfly, fragile-winged.

"I—I think they've all gone. Carol's going upstairs now. Aunt Maddy and Charlie are turning out the lights in the parlor," she whispered to Miss Amy. The caterer's assistant had departed with the last of the big baskets.

Miss Amy untied her apron. Her face was grim. "I'll find Nicholas," she said, shortly.

Janny followed her up the back stairs. In the upper hall she encountered Carol, who stopped her with a disagreeable frown.

"Whatever did you say to Midge Cummings and Stuart Goodwin, Janny? I heard them laughing their heads off over something you'd said." And when Janny stared at her dully, as if she could not comprehend what she meant, Carol gave vent to an exasperated sigh.

"You're so stupid I suppose you can't even remember! But I do think you might have tried to be somebody, at least to-night, as long as we were kind enough to let you *come* to the party——"

Janny was opening her lips to answer when a loud cry from Nicholas Bartley's room sent her running to her uncle's door. Aunt Maddy came from her room, still in the velvet dress. Charlie and Carol came too, Celia behind them.

Miss Amy was on her knees, bending over Nicholas Bartley's prostrate body. He was half-conscious, moaning, his face twisting in pain.

Janny, remembering the bottle of pellets, rushed down to the study. She had forgotten which drawer of the desk it was in; she pulled at one and another before she found it. Then she tore back, pushing Aunt Maddy and Carol unceremoniously from her way.

"Here—give him one! This is what he took—before," she whispered to Miss Amy.

Of them all, Miss Amy alone was calm. She had slipped a pillow under the sick man's head. She put one of the pellets into his mouth. "Bring me a blanket," she directed Janny. "He'll do here until the doctor comes."

Charlie was telephoning to the doctor. Frightened, he was shouting through the telephone. Carol, in the doorway, was sobbing loudly.

Miss Amy, still on her knees, flung Carol a scornful look. "For goodness' sake, keep quiet, Carol. You won't help any one, making a racket like that. Your father's not dead yet. Go and take off those clothes. You, too, Maddy."

Afterwards, thinking of it all, Janny remembered with amazement how unprotestingly Aunt Maddy and Carol had obeyed Miss Amy.

Charlie came back and looked in the door. His face was very frightened. "Where's Kevin?" he asked, shakily.

Miss Amy looked at Janny, putting her fingers to her lips.

"Time enough to tell them that, later," she mumbled. "*He* doesn't know—remember." And she nodded

at Nicholas Bartley, who was resting more easily now, breathing heavily, almost as if he were sleeping.

Looking at her uncle lying there, so stricken, so helpless, his gray hair wet on the temples from the sweat of his anguish, Janny felt the tears brim her eyes, run down and splash on her tight-locked hands. Poor, poor Uncle Nicholas. "The end of the rope."

They heard an automobile stop in the street. "Go let the doctor in," Miss Amy said to Charlie, who was still standing in the door. And presently Charlie was back with Doctor Bain, an odd figure with trousers and coat pulled on over his pajamas, but nevertheless professionally competent and big and assuring. He put his bag down, lifted Nicholas Bartley in his arms and laid him upon the bed. Then, with an imperative gesture, he dismissed Janny and Charlie from the room and closed the door behind them.

Aunt Maddy and Carol were crouching in the hall. Aunt Maddy had taken off the black velvet dress and put on a colored negligée that made her stricken face the paler. Carol still wore the yellow chiffon, but it was sadly crumpled; with her face streaked and twisted with weeping, clinging to her mother, she looked like some frightened little girl in the tinsel and foppery of a masquerade attire. Celia bulked in the end of the hall, her eyes rolling and her heavy lips agape with sheer terror.

They huddled there, listening, waiting. They did not resent Janny's waiting, too. Downstairs the clock

chimed two and at the sound Carol put her hands hysterically over her mouth.

Over them hung the faint lingering smell of flowers —like ghosts of a past happiness, mocking them.

After an interminable time Doctor Bain came out, shutting the door of Nicholas Bartley's room behind him. "Everything's all right," he said brusquely, almost unkindly. "There is no immediate danger. I'll get a nurse here in the morning. Miss Bartley will stay with him to-night. I've told her what to do. You'd better go to bed. The house must be quiet. And *no one* is to disturb him."

He repeated that from the top of the stairway.

"Mamma, may I sleep with you?" Carol begged, her lips trembling painfully. They went together into Mrs. Bartley's room, the mother's arm around the girl.

Charlie, after hesitating a moment, slipped quietly to his own room. But Janny stood still. She could not go away from that shut door. Perhaps Miss Amy might need some one, something. It wouldn't matter if she stayed there very quietly. There was a divan under the broad window of the hall quite close to Uncle Nicholas' door. She crept to it and curled into one corner. Her body ached with pity, pity for Uncle Nicholas, pity for poor Aunt Maddy and for Carol and Charlie in their distress. Aunt Maddy's face, as she had turned away with Carol, haunted her. There had been hurt on it as well as sharp anxiety. Perhaps Aunt Maddy had not wanted to be sent to bed while Cousin Amy stayed with Uncle Nicholas.

The room beyond the shut door was very still. Now and then Janny's straining ear caught the creak of a board where Miss Amy tiptoed across it. A pale line of light shone under the door.

A hush lay over the house. A hush lay over the night world outside the house, the hush of waiting, waiting for the new day. Night was like that. But this coming day must be different from any other day. Janny shuddered, thinking what it must bring. Smash. That was the way that horrible Midge girl had put it. This lovely, orderly home, the old, old walls that had sheltered her father when he was a boy—now they seemed like animate things, things of life that could suffer, suffer with Uncle Nicholas, prostrate behind that closed door, with poor Aunt Maddy, with Carol, so like a golden butterfly, with proud, light-hearted Charlie. And they must go smash.

And she, Janny Bartley, might have prevented it! She writhed in self-blame, shame. She had kept hidden that little map that might have saved them all. She had put off giving it to her uncle, until now it was too late.

And she had let Kevin run away.

Kevin! They did not know yet that he was gone. To-morrow they must be told that; Aunt Maddy must be told that, with everything else. She felt a great anger at Kevin, who selfishly had added this burden to his mother's unhappiness. But her uncle did not know it and they could not tell him. Perhaps he might die without knowing it. He might be dying now, in the great quiet of that room beyond the shut door.

The clock chimed three. Janny counted each echoing note, holding her breath. There were still hours before morning—before the new day.

She stared out into the night. It was raining, now; the rain beat softly upon the tin roof of the porch. The pavement, under the arc of street light, looked oily black. The bare branches of the trees made a dull, soughing sound. A long way off a freight train rumbled. Nearer at hand Janny caught the steady tread of feet. They were approaching toward the house. Perhaps it was Kevin. She pressed her face to the window pane. Out of the darkness a man's figure emerged; it came nearer, passed the house. She saw the gleam of a silver badge. It was only the policeman on his beat! She dropped back in a heap, a dry sob choking her throat.

Oh, where, in all that dark night, was Kevin?

As she crouched there, her face pressed against the cushions of the divan, something of Kevin's hurt came to her. She remembered his face as it had looked one day when the puppets had worked *almost* as he wanted them to. "I've *got* it, Janny, I believe." He had been so excited and so proud. She remembered his big, lean, boy's hands working so patiently with the complicated strings. "Hold this a minute, Janny! Oh, you're *dumb*. This one. *Don't* pull it too tight!" She had been so glad to help him that she had not minded his calling her "dumb." She remembered the day they had dressed the puppets in the little costumes she had made —how they had laughed over them. And then the

weeks when Kevin had stayed away from the barn. Of course he'd gone on working the thing out in his mind when he should have been doing Latin constructions, but, maybe—— And his father had smashed it all, the little stage and the little dolls. Perhaps he had smashed them with the heavy, rusty old spade! She shut her eyes, shuddering, on that picture. She was Kevin, himself, standing helplessly while his father did that thing. All that had happened while the music and laughter went on in the house, while Carol and Charlie danced and Aunt Maddy smiled! And it had made Uncle Nicholas ill—so dreadfully ill. And it had sent Kevin out into the lonely night.

But that had been cowardly! "You shouldn't have gone," she whispered miserably as if Kevin could hear her. He should have left the puppets alone, as he'd promised his father.

She remembered, too, that day they had hiked out into the country, when Kevin had revealed to her that he was lonely. And she had not answered him.

Oh, everything was all so wrong! She pressed her aching face tighter into the cushion. She wanted to pray. She tried to pray—not a church prayer, that wouldn't meet this need. She began, mumbling with wet, tear-wet lips, "Oh, God." But God seemed so far away. "Oh, Doctor John——" *He* would understand——

CHAPTER XXI

THE MIRACLE

Of them all, when morning came, Janny was the most haggard. Miss Amy had found her curled in the corner of the old davenport, half asleep, her weary eyes ringed with shadow.

"Why, you poor baby!" Miss Amy had said it tenderly. "Go and wake Celia and tell her to get some coffee over. Or make it yourself—like as not Celia isn't up to anything this morning."

It was good to have something to do. Coffee—Cousin Amy wouldn't think of coffee if Uncle Nicholas were dying! Janny flew to the kitchen. The morning sun was streaming into it. Out by the pond the willows showed yellow where they dripped with raindrops. The strong aroma of the coffee stimulated her as she measured it carefully, spoonful by spoonful.

She heard Aunt Maddy and Carol talking in low voices upstairs. She heard Cousin Amy telling Aunt Maddy that Uncle Nicholas was sleeping. Charlie's door opened.

The coffee was boiling. Oh, she wished they might all have a cup before they knew the truth—about Kevin, and the smash.

Wisely, Miss Amy managed that. She literally shooed the family to the kitchen. Celia waddled in, her eyes still rolling and her heavy lips hanging. Doctor

Bain came with the nurse and went directly upstairs.

Aunt Maddy was fully dressed. She took the coffee-pot quietly from Janny. "Get some cups, child," she directed. Janny, watching her covertly, felt a growing wonder. There was a new strength in Aunt Maddy's voice, in the steady movements of her beautiful hands. But then, she didn't know everything, Janny reminded herself, miserably.

Carol was very pale, but she drank her coffee and ate her toast with hearty relish.

After a little Miss Amy joined them. "I'm discharged," she said in a voice she tried to make brisk. "Any coffee left?"

"Where's Kevin?" Charlie cried from the door. "He isn't in his room or out in the barn——"

Janny, in a corner by the window, shut her eyes.

"He's gone off somewhere." It did not sound like Miss Amy—those clipped, hard words. Then she gave Kevin's note to Kevin's mother. For a moment there was no sound in the room.

"Does Nicholas know?" Mrs. Bartley asked finally. When Miss Amy shook her head Mrs. Bartley turned to the others. "Not a word about this, then——" And she walked out of the room, her head high.

Carol began to cry, her head bent over her coffee-cup. Charlie was staring helplessly at Miss Amy.

"Hadn't we ought to tell the police—or something?" he begged.

Miss Amy went on buttering toast. "He'll come

back—if for nothing more than Celia's pancakes," she said grimly.

"Maybe he's at Garr Payne's or Tom Power's," conjectured Charlie.

Janny longed to tell them that Kevin was not as heartless as he seemed, to tell them how wonderful the marionettes were and how very much Kevin had cared about them. But she did not open her lips. After all, probably Kevin *was* with one of his friends. He must come back—perhaps any moment. His going was not so serious as their concern for Uncle Nicholas.

The morning moved forward with the forced, inconsequential activities of a family under great strain. The nurse, starched, efficient, went in and out of the sick room. Doctor Bain came again. Aunt Maddy talked to him in the upper hall outside of Uncle Nicholas' door. Janny, putting her room to rights, heard him say in his heavy voice: "It is a case of complete collapse. The heart is bad, too. But I am confident rest will bring him around."

Then Uncle Nicholas was not going to die! Janny wanted to run and find Carol and Charlie and tell them. When she did encounter them she knew by their faces that they knew, too, that Doctor Bain did not think their father was going to die.

Noon came and the family ate again, this time, as usual, in the dining room. They prolonged the eating and managed a cheer that seemed real, though each one knew it wasn't. Aunt Maddy and Miss Amy talked of the efficiency of the nurse and of Doctor Bain's wide

experience in nervous cases. Kevin's name was carefully avoided. And no one spoke of the party.

They were still sitting around the table when the doorbell rang. Celia came back with word that it was that "Mr. Mann man." "Of course," cried Aunt Maddy, rising at once. She smoothed out her dress with a mechanical movement.

"Hadn't I better talk to him, Mother?" asked Charlie, but Aunt Maddy shook her head. Janny saw her lips tighten.

Janny knew Theodore Mann was Uncle Nicholas' law partner. And she knew that Aunt Maddy knew what was coming. And Aunt Maddy had not flinched. Her tone as she said, "No, Son," to Charlie had been almost gentle, very calm.

They heard Aunt Maddy and Theodore Mann talking, talking, in the study. Over and above and under the other sounds of the house the two voices went on and on. Charlie and Carol hung about in the dining room, uneasily prescient of something wrong, something more than their father's illness; Janny herself waited in an anguish of apprehension.

After a long time Aunt Maddy came in with Theodore Mann. Her face was waxy white and her eyes were a little bewildered. She was holding her hand to her head as if she had to steady it. "You must all know what has happened!" she cried. When Theodore Mann protested that there was time enough to tell it, she frowned at him. "Time—why wait? It concerns us all. We are poor, children, desperately poor. We

haven't a cent we can call our own. We can scarcely claim this house we live in——" She waved her hand over the spacious room. Janny caught the gleam of the beautiful blue diamond on her finger. She looked anxiously at Aunt Maddy. Would *she* break under this blow—as Uncle Nicholas had done?

But, strangely, Aunt Maddy grew calmer as she talked. She silenced Carol's puzzled exclamation. She put aside the chair Theodore Mann pulled forward for her. She seemed all at once less fragile, as if from some untapped source she was summoning strength for this need.

"We are quite equal to facing this." She actually smiled at the anxious lawyer. "Our first thought is for Nicholas. If he can only get well——" She stopped, to control her voice.

"I am at your service, Mrs. Bartley—remember that. And I am sure that—by radical changes in your living—this can be tided over. I have an appointment at the bank at four o'clock. To-morrow I will have more definite figures for you. Until then I beg you dismiss it from your mind; you have enough anxiety as it is."

Janny began to breathe. The blow had fallen—yet the old walls still stood! And Aunt Maddy was wonderful! She wanted to tell Aunt Maddy that she was wonderful; she got no nearer that, however, than telling Miss Amy.

"Humph! Didn't I tell you about that woman in

San Francisco who got back her eyesight by a good shaking up? Maddy's found her backbone."

As the days went on Janny marvelled more and more at the miracle of Aunt Maddy's finding her backbone, at her steady voice and her quiet manner. Though her eyes were deep and shadowed with the pain of anxiety, there were no tears in them; she did not complain of anything now. Her manner toward Janny herself changed subtly. She thanked Janny for little attentions with a gentleness that deepened Janny's compassion.

The change in Aunt Maddy affected the entire household. Even Carol confined her weeping to her own room. Charlie went about with a manly gravity more endearing than his old gaiety of spirit. Celia forgot her rheumatism.

Mrs. Bartley spent hours closeted in the study with Theodore Mann, and more hours going over endless figures with Miss Amy. Janny heard them calculating on this saving and that. "We must get along without Celia." But when Mrs. Bartley pronounced that verdict she reckoned without Celia. When she told Celia they could not afford even the wage Celia so often had held insufficient, the old negress tossed her head.

"I guess ole Celia stand by her fam'ly. I ain't goin' to walk out on Mistah Ba'tley when he sicken unto death."

The young people had not gone back to school. When Carol cried out against it, "Oh, I *can't*, Mamma, not yet," Mrs. Bartley and Miss Amy had agreed that

they might remain at home until Doctor Bain pronounced Nicholas Bartley out of danger.

Janny guessed that Charlie shrank from the questioning at school about Kevin. No word had come concerning him. Theodore Mann was making every effort to pick up a trace of the boy, but as yet had not found any. Sometimes Janny wakened in the middle of the night, thinking she heard his step or his voice. Sometimes in the night she heard Charlie moving in his room. Perhaps Charlie lay wide-eyed through the night, listening, waiting. Perhaps Aunt Maddy sat by her window watching. Sometimes when the doorbell rang or the telephone, Janny caught Aunt Maddy putting her hand quickly to her heart as if to stop its wild beating. But there came no word from Kevin.

When two weeks had passed Doctor Bain told them that Nicholas Bartley was out of danger. "I mean *immediate* danger," he added. "His complete cure depends upon nursing, absolute quiet and—peace of mind." He looked around the little circle.

Janny remembered what Miss Amy had said that night that now seemed so long ago: "Nicholas Bartley's bought everything but peace of mind with his money." Poor Uncle Nicholas—and now he needed just that to make him well. They would give it to him as long as they could, nothing of the truth had been allowed to creep into that quiet room, but how long could they keep from him the knowledge of what Kevin had done?

"As soon as he can be safely moved I would like

to take him to the Rosemount Sanitarium," Doctor Bain added.

Janny saw Aunt Maddy flash a look toward Miss Amy. A sanitarium would mean, of course, an added expense—an expense they had not included in their figuring. But she quietly acquiesced to the doctor's plan.

At once Janny determined to take her map to Theodore Mann. She would not wait for Uncle Nicholas to get better. She would give it to the lawyer and tell him all about it. She would give it to him the next time he came to the house, which probably would be this very evening, for he rarely missed calling each evening.

As she took out the little scrap of paper and looked at it, Janny felt that inexplainable, comforting closeness of her father. He'd be glad she was giving it away. It was such an old, ragged piece of paper, its lines and writing so faded, yet for Janny it had significance. It *must* mean something. She thought of it now as the key to a wealth that would bring relief to these people who were her father's people, who were hers. Standing there in her little room, she felt with a wave of something akin to happiness, that this great trouble which had fallen on the family had given her a definite place with them—unrebuked she had shared with them their anxiety for Uncle Nicholas, their sorrow at Kevin's inconsiderate going. She had done little things to help and they had not snubbed her, not even Carol. And now——

She waylaid Theodore Mann in the hall. Aunt

Maddy had gone out with Charlie and had left word for Theodore Mann to wait.

"Please, may I tell you something?" she asked shyly.

He smiled down at her eager face. His gaze lingered on it. He had not given much notice before to this girl Nicholas Bartley had brought from the North country, but now something about her held his attention.

Janny told her story. She told of all that she remembered of that long-ago day when her father had given her the map and bade her keep it until Joe Primrose came back. She told of what Uncle Nicholas had heard in the North-country camps of the Lost Mine. Without any doubt this little map gave the secret of its whereabouts.

She sat forward on the edge of the chair the lawyer courteously had placed for her. She talked rapidly, breathlessly, her hands locked together. Oh, she *must* make him understand, she must fire him with the enthusiasm she knew from her life in Painted Post—the enthusiasm of those rough, rugged men who needed only the word silver to set their feet on strange, hard paths.

But as she talked, cold despair began to creep over her. Theodore Mann was smiling as he would smile at a child prattling a fairy story. He smiled and sat back in Uncle Nicholas' chair. He wouldn't believe! He was like Uncle Nicholas. He scarcely looked at the little map he held in his hand.

"My dear child," he began when Janny stopped,

simply because if she said another word she would scream out in her vexation. "My dear child, there must have been other maps like this—treasured as your father treasured this. And they've led to nothing more than chasing rainbows. There is not a corner of that country now that has not been searched over and over for silver."

Janny trembled. That country! What did he know of those endless tracts of forest, reaching on and on beyond the rim of sky, those corners hidden from men by barriers of rushing stream and unyielding rock? Of its promise and its mystery?

He saw her disappointment. He leaned forward, put the map back in her hands, and patted her fingers over it.

"Anyway, my child, it would take thousands of dollars to finance the search. And just now your uncle is not in a position to beg or borrow it. Keep your map —it belonged to your father. And let me tell you something very confidential. It isn't going to hurt your cousins to worry out of this thing. It is going to teach them something your uncle never could. Now run away, for I must look over some papers before I give them to your aunt."

Janny left him crushed in spirit, resentful. She resented the kindly humor of his tone, his patting her hand. He had said: "It belonged to your father" as if her father was the sort of man who "chased rainbows." What if he was? She liked that kind far better than smug lawyer men who sat smiling and unbelieving.

But she was not beaten. She went to her room and wrote a long letter to Doctor John. *He* would understand! She wrote page after page, of Uncle Nicholas' grave illness, of Kevin's going, of the disaster that hung over the proud old house. She wrote tragically, her words a wail. She begged Doctor John to give the map to some one, any one, who would go at once in search of the Happyday Mine. Not until the letter was finished, the map enclosed, the envelope sealed, did she draw a long breath.

Doctor John would believe the little scrap of paper was something more than a fairy story!

CHAPTER XXII

CHANGES

EARLY in May, Nicholas Bartley was removed to the Rosemount Sanitarium.

With his going a mask dropped from the family, a mask they had managed gallantly for his deceiving. For his sake they had pretended even with one another. Now they faced the hard truth of things.

Kevin was gone. They had found no trace of him. He had made no sign, even of his well-being. Apprehension, unspeakable possibilities, lay like black shadows over them all; though Miss Amy maintained stoutly again and again that he was "all right" and "he'd get a good taste of foraging for himself for a while," her voice always rang forced.

Janny remembered that her father never had come back; he had not heeded the hurt he left behind him. And maybe Kevin wouldn't.

They faced another truth. The little economies Aunt Maddy and Miss Amy had instituted, and which seemed very big when they talked them over, were really too small to meet the need of the moment. There was a despair in Aunt Maddy's voice when she pronounced that.

"What can we do, Amy?"

No longer was Miss Amy only the "poor relation" of the family; more and more Aunt Maddy appealed

to her, until the little woman seemed to grow visibly in stature with her new importance.

Now she looked from Aunt Maddy to Carol, to Charlie, even to Janny, her round eyes quiet with speculation. Was she considering perhaps selling the clothes on their backs?

"Why don't we rent this house and go live out at the farm?"

Carol and Charlie cried out in one voice at this. But neither Aunt Maddy nor Miss Amy noticed them.

"Theodore Mann spoke of that," Aunt Maddy answered. "He said we could rent it easily—there's a shortage of houses here. It would pay the expenses at Rosemount. And we could live very cheaply at the farm." Mrs. Bartley said it slowly, conclusively.

"It's the only sensible thing to do," agreed Miss Amy briskly. "It won't hurt any of us to spend a summer out there—do us good, maybe. And by fall things will have straightened out some."

Janny looked fearfully at Carol. Poor Carol had no need of restraint now, to hush her lamenting lest it disturb the sick man. Her face was convulsed with indignation, self-pity. Tears streamed down her cheeks.

"None of you think of me—or Charlie," she accused brokenly. "It's all right for you and Mamma to talk about burying yourselves out in that hideous old place in the country, but I won't go—I'll run away like Kevin did. I'd rather *die* than live out in that place. Every one will know we're just beggars. It's—it's awful. I can't look any of the girls in the face now

but if—if I have to tell them *that*——" Carol was finding increasing difficulty in shaping her words over her sobbing. "It's cruel—Dad might have found some way —I—I don't mind giving up going abroad, though it broke my heart—but—but—*that*! Mamma, you can't love me a bit to consider it a minute—you can't——"

Janny felt very sorry for Carol. She knew nothing of the farm of which they talked, but Carol made her think it a very awful place, made her feel, as she did, that going there would mark to the world the family's ruin. She looked anxiously at Aunt Maddy and Miss Amy. They would surely find some other way.

But neither of them appeared moved by Carol's outburst. Aunt Maddy's lips pressed into a straighter line and she did not answer Carol at once. When she did it was gently. "It will not be easy for me to make such a change in our living, Carol. But if it will make things happier, less of a worry for your father when he comes back, don't you think you can endure it?"

At that Carol stood up. She tried desperately to manage a dignified hurt, but her swollen face and eyes, her tear-wet lips, made her look only rebellious and angry.

"I suppose you'll do every silly thing Cousin Amy suggests," she said in a shrill voice, "without thinking that it's really Charlie and I who'll pay——" She liked that; it emphasized how abused she was. "And I don't think that's fair, for *we* haven't done anything!" And then she flung herself out of the room.

Janny did not look at Aunt Maddy. She couldn't

bear to. But Aunt Maddy did not seem even annoyed by Carol's unkindness. She began quietly talking to Miss Amy of the things they would need to take out to the farm to make it habitable, of what they must store.

"I will take the portraits down," she said, "strangers will not care for them." There was a little edge of pain in her voice as she said it. Oh, no, it was not easy for Aunt Maddy! All at once Janny noticed that she was thinner, that her head drooped a little as if she were unutterably tired, that her eyes were bigger and very dark with anxiety. But her voice was still steady as she talked to Miss Amy.

They could hear Carol sobbing in her room. Charlie, who had followed her there, was vainly attempting to quiet her. Janny could hear him saying over and over, "Oh, come now, Sis," but to no avail. Janny longed to go to her too, but a mounting curiosity to know more of the farm held her where she was.

"The girls can play at housekeeping out there. Janny here can teach Carol to cook. It'll be fun—like camping," Miss Amy was declaring quite cheerfully.

"Where is the farm?" Janny asked at her first opportunity.

Miss Amy explained that it was about ten miles out of the city. It was a few acres that had come to Nicholas Bartley years ago by the will of a grateful client, and had always been a joke in the family until now, when it became a refuge. It had not been tenanted for years. The Bartleys had picnicked there sometimes when the children were little but they had not visited it for several summers.

Though Janny felt the tragedy of strangers living in the home on Maple Avenue, she enjoyed a growing excitement at the change. It was doing something big to avert the "smash."

Within a few days Theodore Mann had found a tenant for the house. He brought her one evening to look over the place. She was a big, florid woman, overdressed and condescending, and as she trailed through the rooms she left behind her a heavy odor of French perfume. She pulled contemptuously at the old velour hangings with fat, ringed fingers. "I never liked old places like this," she said, "but it's not as bad as spending the summer in a hotel." And she agreed to pay four hundred dollars a month, which made Theodore Mann quite gleeful.

"She never balked a minute at my figure," he said.

Aunt Maddy, her nose lifted as if trying to escape the lingering odor of Jasmine, was estimating: "June, July, August— we even might stay out there through October. Five times four hundred—maybe more——"

To her joy, Janny was allowed a part in getting ready for the move. Miss Amy let her pack silver and books and fine china, let her label the barrels for storing and the boxes to go to the country. There were not many of these. "The less stuff we take out there, the quicker we'll get settled. For once we won't be cluttered up with a lot of things." How Miss Amy relished that "we"! Janny observed how she let her tongue hang on the word.

Carol refused to take any part in the preparations for the change. She maintained an aggrieved quiet,

held herself aloof from them all. She was back in school again but Janny knew she was shunning her old friends. "She couldn't look more like a piece of crêpe if her father had died," Miss Amy snorted once when Carol walked sadly in and out of the room. "Don't look so sorry for her, Janny. She's enjoying it, mark me."

But Janny did feel sorry for Carol and she felt sorry for Charlie. She knew Charlie was shunning his friends, too. And Charlie graduated in June and there were all kinds of gaieties for the Senior class in which Charlie was taking no part. Sometimes Janny wondered if it were entirely the change in the family fortunes which had made Charlie lose his old gaiety, whether it might not be that sorry climax of the basketball game and the defeat of the Award, or maybe—— Then one day she came to know it was Kevin. Charlie was helping her pack away what was left of the marionettes. She had asked him to help her. She had hard ado to keep from weeping a little over the task; she could not forget how patiently Kevin had worked with them, how he had loved them, and now no one knew where Kevin was and the poor little doll's house was a hopeless tangle of splintered wood and wires. And all of a sudden she had surprised Charlie brushing a grimy hand over his eyes.

"Can't help it, Jan. I wouldn't mind *anything* if old Kev would show up."

Between Janny and Mary had fallen the shadow of a coolness. Janny, conscious of the approaching separation, snatched every hour she could from the busy

days at home to be with her chum, yet was acutely aware when with her of something gone from the old, happy friendship. She would have liked to tell Mary all about the trouble at home, the gravity of Uncle Nicholas' illness, of poor Kevin and his marionettes, of the smash that was not exactly a smash in the devastating sense of the word, of the miracle of Aunt Maddy's backbone, of the real reason for going to the country, of how poor Carol hated it. In Painted Post one wore one's trouble where all the little world might come and see it and sympathize, but in Newton one shut it away behind walls, behind steady eyes and voices and brave pretences. Because Aunt Maddy and Carol and Charlie hid theirs this way so must Janny—even from Mary. And she knew Mary knew she was hiding it, and she knew Mary resented it. It wasn't really being friends as they'd been friends. And because she wasn't so sure that Mary would feel sorry that Carol had had to give up going to school in France and that she must live in a place where she'd rather die than live, Janny was, loyally, the more reticent.

When Janny betrayed an eagerness to get into the country, Mary laughed at her with lofty scorn. It was all right if you liked that kind of thing, but Mary didn't. Newton was dull enough in the summer, goodness knew, but it was better than the country, where there wasn't anything more to do than listen to a lot of chickens and cows.

Janny rarely saw Garr, for he was occupied with the Senior activities.

Then one day the barrels were despatched to storage, the truck loaded with the necessary things for the country, the old house, stripped, unhappy-looking, was ready for the strangers. Miss Amy jabbed down a hat over her head and briskly drew on cotton gloves, Carol appeared, red-eyed, from a last communion with the girlish pretties of her room, Charlie came with the car from the garage.

The postman turned into the walk, smiling, letters in his outstretched hand. Janny recognized a large square envelope with Doctor John's handwriting. She took it eagerly, ran behind the automobile to peep into it.

". . . I am going up North myself with your map. But do not set your heart on any riches, my child. It may be worth something, and it may not. In any case —keep your eyes ahead on the trail, as I once bade you."

Dear Doctor John! It was like him to go himself! She tucked the letter into her pocket. She wanted, oh so much, to tell them all about it. Instead she hummed softly to herself as she sat squeezed on the front seat between Charlie and Miss Amy. It was a bright day, just as it had been a bright day when she sailed down the Shingle River on the *Nelly B.* The meadows were green and they rode between fragrant apple blossoms and in some places the way was white and pink with a drift of the flowery petals. She did not look back once at the city, as Carol did, even Aunt Maddy; she kept her shining eyes on the road far ahead.

CHAPTER XXIII

KEVIN

An old apple tree right at the very front door, its pink-and-white cheek laid lovingly against the door frame, funny window panes winking behind giant lilac bushes, still abloom, a tumbling fence hidden under honeysuckle, a flagstone path wreathed with myrtle, encircling hills, marked off, crazy-quilt fashion, with sprawling farm sheds, vineyards, patches of ploughed ground, sun-bright now, green meadow lands—Janny marked each as new-found treasure, her breath held in delight.

She had slipped out of the house alone. Behind her she could hear Celia and Miss Amy talking over their scrubbing. Charlie was hammering nails to reinforce the old shelves in the kitchen. Carol and her mother were upstairs unpacking bed-linen.

A homey smell of burning wood mingled with the fragrance of grass and shrub and new upturned earth. Janny's head lifted as she sniffed it. Overhead the sky was blue, spring blue. She felt the old childish sense of running, of swift wings to her spirit, of a heady joy of living; she felt it a little guiltily, as one does who suddenly laughs with the shadow of tragedy at one's very skirts.

She looked at the rambling old farmhouse, set in a waste of overgrowth, broken fences, and saw it a

friendly house. "I'm going to love it," she said aloud, looking upward at the gable window to see if Carol could have overheard her.

"Janny. Janny, where are you?" Aunt Maddy called. And Janny ran back into the house, importantly, because Aunt Maddy needed her.

It had been Janny, the day before, who had mastered the obstinacy of the long-unused stove. Janny, with her superior knowledge, who had trimmed the lamp wicks until the lamps glowed brightly, dispelling the shadows from the low-ceilinged rooms. It had been Janny's excitement that had tided over the dismay of the others, her young energy that had rekindled their faltering courage, set them about making things livable, Charlie to putting up the beds, Celia to cooking bacon and scrambled eggs.

Now that first night, a night of such enveloping silence that Carol had hidden her head under the bedclothes, was behind them and a new day had come, sweet with sunshine streaming in through open windows, bees buzzing in the honeysuckle, birds singing and winging, a day of such all-rightness that even Carol gave a hand in the general activity, though she refused to smile.

"Janny, take these kitchen cloths out to Amy," said Aunt Maddy, coming down the funny, crooked stairs.

Making a home—that was what it was, Janny thought. Making the old waiting house into a home. Aunt Maddy, in one of Celia's long aprons, her lovely hair rumpled, called them all in conference over the

"living room." It was a long narrow room, graced with a plain little fireplace, with windows looking to the hills.

"I never thought of curtains," Aunt Maddy mused.

"Who wants curtains?" cheered Miss Amy from the doorway. "Who wants better curtains than those lilac bushes outside the window? And the rain will wash them for us," she added practically.

"We might paint the woodwork a pale green and the floor a deeper green, like the leaves," Aunt Maddy went on, seeing the room like that with her speculative eyes. Aunt Maddy looked as if she were enjoying this "making" a home. Perhaps she had forgotten already the hurt of letting strangers into the house on Maple Avenue. "Charlie, you can paint it and I'll help you. I had quite a knack at painting once. I have some lovely old yellow silk we can put on that table——"

"And can't we put up some bookshelves?" begged Janny, blushing at her courage.

Aunt Maddy nodded. "Why, yes, of course we can. Find me a piece of paper and a pencil, Carol. I must make a list of what we need. Paint—more than anything else. We'll put the Bokhara rug there in front of the fireplace. Amy, I'm going to cut up that Chinese coat for cushions for those funny old chairs. We must be very gay for Nicholas when he comes——"

Making a home! Oh, it was fun talking and planning, measuring, putting something here and then changing it to another place, examining the tables and bureaus and finding little funny drawers and cupboards

where no one expected them to be, peeping out through the windows and doors at the glory of the springtide outside.

Miss Amy and Celia had whisked the kitchen into order. It had not been an easy task; they regarded its accomplishment as nothing short of heroic. They had scrubbed the shelves of the old cupboards and put clean paper upon them. These were funny, tip-tilted cupboards, with wooden doors and little wooden knobs. The kitchen floor tilted a little, too. There was an old-fashioned pantry and a preserve closet where one had to bend one's head to keep from bumping it. And outside the kitchen door there was a pump, almost covered with primroses.

A little room under the west gable had been allotted to Carol and Janny. Like the rest of the house, it sadly needed paint, but there was a squatty bureau and an old chest and a cupboard of shelves built in under the slanting roof that delighted Janny.

Repeatedly Miss Amy had reminded them that they had all summer to get settled, yet each one worked feverishly, as if the house must be put in order before night. At supper time Celia served chicken and hot biscuits in gravy in the little dining room, and they ate with relish, hungry from the day's work. And tired, they sat around the table until it began to grow dark and Celia brought a lamp.

"Amy, I believe that old sideboard *is* walnut," Aunt Maddy declared. "Did we bring any of that furniture polish out with us?" And Janny knew Aunt

Maddy was planning to tackle the old sideboard and table and chairs the next day. *This* the Aunt Maddy of the headaches and the chaise-longue with its soft pillows!

Just as she had slipped out in the morning, Janny stole out of the door now, into the dusk. A band of silver light hung over the hills. A row of fir trees on the top of one of the hills stood out against the soft light.

"They look as if they were marching. I'll climb up there some day," thought Janny. She was queerly happy, with that happiness she always felt when something nice was coming—like Christmas, or a birthday, or Doctor John returning from Stafford.

She watched two bright lights coming over the hill road into the valley. They looked like round eyes. An automobile, of course, but she liked to think it wasn't.

The automobile stopped before the house. Janny saw a boy climb out of it, heard him thank the driver for the "lift." Then the automobile started on with a rattle and clap-clap.

"Kevin!" Janny cried and ran to him.

Her lifted voice brought Aunt Maddy and Charlie and the others to the door. Charlie ran down the path, too.

But Kevin brushed past Charlie and Janny as if they were not there. He walked straight to his mother where she stood in the doorway under the old apple tree. She stood a little above him, so as he threw his arms about her, his head pressed against her breast.

"Mother, I—I—didn't know about Dad. I—came

—when—I—knew." He said it brokenly and he clung tightly to her, his face buried.

Mrs. Bartley leaned and kissed the rough red head; her arms as they held the boy were trembling. Then: "Come in and see how nice we're fixing things," she said simply. There was no reproach in her voice. Perhaps she knew Kevin did not need that now to punish him.

Charlie had Kevin's bag and hold of his arm. Celia and Miss Amy were both talking at the same time. They all squeezed in through the little hall and into the living room, where the lamp on the table cast a circle of warm glow.

Kevin—back! Janny wanted to laugh and cry, but she did neither. She followed Celia to the kitchen to help fix "the boy" some "vittals."

Kevin—back! She kept saying it. But this was not the same Kevin, she thought, peeping at him through the door. He looked taller—the slouch was gone from his shoulders, gone the old hang of his head. He was evading Charlie's questioning. "Oh, I've been a lot of places," but his eyes met his mother's squarely. "There's no place like home, though."

A bed must be fixed for him, so, while Kevin ate the supper Celia laid for him, Janny and Charlie flew to that task. They could hear Kevin and his mother talking while he ate.

Afterwards they all sat in the living room while Mrs. Bartley explained why they had moved out to the farm. She made it sound almost like a jolly adven-

ture. And Carol sat in shadow so that Kevin could not see the scornful tightening of her lips.

Janny, a little apart, watched Kevin's face. Would he see the miracle of Aunt Maddy? But if he did, he made no sign. All he said was that he thought it would be fun making the old farm look like something.

He followed Janny when she went out into the kitchen to lay the fire for the morning. With expert hands he placed the kindling.

"How do you know how to do it?" Janny laughed.

He did not look at her. "Do you know where I've been?" he asked in a low tone. He nodded back toward the living room. "I won't tell the others—yet. But I want you to know. I've been with your Doctor John! For three whole weeks. First he said I couldn't stay and then he said I could, for a little while, and then your letter came—about Dad—and of course I took the first boat down the river. But, say, Jan, he taught me a lot. I—I wish a fellow could live with him——"

Janny reached out a hand and caught Kevin's and held it tightly.

"Isn't he the grandest man who ever lived?" She fairly sang the words. "And Kevin, after you've lived with him even just a little while, I think you always know, somehow, what he'd want you to do. He's like that."

Afterwards, lying in her little bed, she thought of Kevin's going to Doctor John. Carol was sleeping heavily. One hand lay under a flushed cheek where it pressed into the pillow. There were unhappy shadows under

the fringe of curling eyelash. Now and then her breath caught as if even in sleep she wanted to cry. But now Janny had no room for pity for Carol. She had to think of Kevin going to Doctor John, of Kevin in Painted Post in the little cabin with Mother Faire and Toby, of Kevin walking up the trail to Shingle Falls. It brought it all very close to her.

What did it matter that miles lay between her and those dear ones? What did it matter that months had passed since that day she had waved to them, on the river landing, seen their faces grow into a blur, disappear? They were always close. It would always be like that.

And now Kevin was back. That shadow had lifted. And Kevin was different; he would never be the old disagreeable boy he had been, hiding himself behind the wall of self-pity. Doctor John had done that for them.

Stars winked at her from the patch of night outlined by the uncurtained windows, friendly, wise stars. She smiled at them. *They* knew. For centuries and eons they had twinkled down on foolish, worrying people. Oh, things would come out all right!

She fell asleep and dreamed of Doctor John coming, as Kevin had come, in a rattling automobile over the hill road, and he carried bags of silver and put them in her hands, and in turn she put them in Aunt Maddy's aproned lap. And Carol, seeing the bulging bags, laughed her old light, butterfly kind of laugh.

CHAPTER XXIV

UNDER THE APPLE TREE

"I THINK it would be nice to have some young folks out," said Miss Amy one evening after supper. "We'll have room enough when Maddy goes away."

Aunt Maddy was going to join her husband for a stay at Theodore Mann's summer home in Muskoka. Doctor Bain had said Nicholas Bartley was well enough for the change. That meant that he was well enough now to know the truth of everything. Aunt Maddy would tell him. And after the visit in Muskoka he would join the family at the farm.

Aunt Maddy was very busy getting ready, very excited too, in a girlish way. She was pressing and packing her prettiest dresses—last summer's dresses, and shampooing her hair and fussing with her hands and finger-nails.

"I don't want Nicholas to find me in the least changed," she explained, laughing.

"He will, though," said Miss Amy, but so low that only Janny caught the words. But then only Janny would have understood what Miss Amy really meant about Aunt Maddy's backbone. Janny thought Aunt Maddy very brave to want to be with Nicholas Bartley when he heard of the smash, that hadn't been a real smash, and she thought Uncle Nicholas must love this new Aunt Maddy much more than the old one. And

she thought he was certain to love the farm when he came. He couldn't help it.

It had not been so much the magic of paint and what Miss Amy called elbow grease, or the energy behind trimming shears and sickles and hammers, as an indomitable determination to make of it a comforting, restful home, that had transformed the old farm in the weeks that had passed since their coming to it. Sometimes Janny could not quite believe that it had happened; sometimes she thought it was all Aunt Maddy who had done it, and sometimes Kevin.

Kevin, quite simply, and somewhat masterfully, had taken command of the family. Perhaps he shouldered the responsibility the more eagerly because he had come to see himself cowardly in running away and wanted to make amends. He had left the painting to Charlie and his mother and the girls and he worked outside, clearing the yard of its overgrowth, mending the fences and the outhouses. He grew sunburned and freckled, his hair burned redder from exposure, but he was happy, revelled in his old clothes, exhibited his muscles with the pride of a wrestler. Janny had caught him more than once giving his mother a shy caress, sometimes putting his tanned cheek furtively against hers, sometimes just reaching out and taking her hand to hold it a minute.

Inside the house the "home" had slowly grown toward what Aunt Maddy had held in mental picture. A neighbor farmer had papered the rooms, working evenings, visiting with Miss Amy and Celia as he worked. Now the woodwork was the pale green of

the leaves in springtime and the floor a darker green. The lilac bushes screened the uncurtained windows of the living room with a tracery of shadow, there were bookshelves and a wood box stained a dull brown, and the yellow silk was on the old table and bright cushions in the chairs, which Miss Amy had recovered with brown denim. A fine bit of Chinese embroidery hung on the wall between the windows and the Bokhara rug lay in the place of honor before the open fireplace.

Janny loved this room, but not so much as her own little room upstairs. Aunt Maddy had let her choose the paper for this, and she had decided on a pale-gray paper with tiny rosebuds in it. The rosebuds looked as if they were floating all around her. She liked the way the ceiling sloped so close to her head and the low window sill. She had drawn her bed close to the window so that at night she could watch the stars—whenever she could make herself stay awake—and, first thing in the morning, look out to the hills. Kevin had made a flower box for the window and she had planted nasturtiums in it, and when the wind blew a little they nodded at her. She wished Carol loved the little room as she did. But Carol didn't. Carol called her silly when she said good-morning to the nasturtiums and again when she discovered the robin's nest in the apple tree deserted. But then it was something to have Carol even call her silly!

Not without many trying moments and setbacks had this perfection come. Clumsy fingers had spilled paint pots, a gutter pipe had broken, letting water leak

on the new paper, Charlie had smashed his finger putting up the bookshelves, Aunt Maddy had had a real headache from sewing, the pump had refused to pump, mice had gotten into the pantry; there had been hours of faltering for them all, evenings when they sat out under the apple tree on what Charlie called the "terrace" without talking, simply because each was afraid to say anything lest it betray his discouragement. But always there had been something that had made them all rally, smile again, face the little things that had gone wrong, and they all knew that that something was to have it ready for Uncle Nicholas. Always Aunt Maddy would say: "I want this done before Nicholas comes home." Now Aunt Maddy called it home.

Kevin had spaded up a little square beside the house and Aunt Maddy had put in some flower seeds. And, as if the seeds knew why she wanted them to grow, they grew amazingly, already were showing blossoms.

There had been two startling desertions. Early in July, Miss Amy had gone into the city with Charlie and had come back with a job. She was going to work in the Élite Millinery Shoppe. She said quite proudly that it was spelled S-h-o-p-p-e, as if that made her job a little different.

"You don't need me out here now. Janny and Carol can help Celia and I like the money. I can bring books out from the library, too."

Janny had looked at Aunt Maddy, a little frightened, expecting her disapproval, but she had shown none. Miss Amy had started work the next week, look-

ing very important as she walked away to meet the bus at the state road.

The next week Charlie announced to them that he was going to work in a bank. Theodore Mann had helped him get the position. "I'm not a bit of use here." He looked ruefully at his blistered hands as he said it. "Kevin will tell you that. And eighteen dollars a week is something."

It was a little lonely with Miss Amy and Charlie both gone through the day. Janny knew how much Carol missed them. But it made the evenings more jolly when they came back with news of the city, of little things to which no one would have listened before, but which now seemed as important as if they were of another world. Janny saw how Carol hung on them. Each evening she asked Charlie if he'd seen any of the "crowd."

Carol had grown thinner. Because she refused to go out when the sun was shining, she was still pale, and there was a little droop perpetually on her pretty lips. She spent most of the time in a corner of the living room, reading, or wandering listlessly from room to room. And quite often Janny heard her crying softly into her pillow.

Sometimes Janny tried awkwardly to get closer to Carol. If only Carol would be more friendly with her perhaps she wouldn't feel quite so lonely. She wished she could make Carol like to do the things she did. She had found the road that led to the fir trees and had stood among them, feeling she was marching with

them, atop of the world. But Carol had refused to walk—said she hated it. She hated berrying, too. She hated all the country noises and the country smells. She hated everything, with determined consistency.

Sometimes Janny was tempted to tell Carol of the Happyday Mine and of her dream, but she did not want Carol to call her silly about *that*. She clung to that dream, thought of it when she was ready to go to sleep, hoping she might dream it again. And she began to watch the mail when the rural carrier brought it to the box out in the road, and she watched the approaching automobiles with the wild hope that one of them might bring her dream true.

When Miss Amy spoke of inviting some young people out she looked at Carol. Aunt Maddy looked at Carol, too. "I think that would be nice," she said, almost coaxingly. But Carol tossed her head.

"If you mean any of my friends—I wouldn't invite them out here." Then she saw that she had hurt her mother. "Anyway, they are all away, Mamma, you know they are."

Then Miss Amy, turning to Janny, suggested: "Why don't you invite that nice Mary Payne and her brother out?"

Janny gasped. But Kevin agreed for her. "Oh, say—do that. Garr can help me put in those posts for the old grape-vines."

When no one offered any reason against it, Janny found voice to cry: "Oh, *may* we ask them, Aunt Maddy?"

"I can use your room, Mother," Carol put in quickly.

"And I'll put up the cot in Dad's room for old Garr."

"They can come out with me the day you go," added Miss Amy.

Not quite believing that it could be so, Janny knew they might be invited. And when an answer came from Mary to her letter, saying that they could come, Janny began to make a great many more plans than there were hours of the day in which to carry them out.

"I didn't know there were so many things you young ones could find to do," Miss Amy laughed at her.

Carol made it plain that these plans were no concern of hers. When Janny appealed to her, "Don't you think it would be nice to take our supper over to Potter's Falls?" she said that it would be nice for any one who liked that kind of thing—she hated picnics, herself.

But Janny was too happy at Mary's coming to worry about Carol's attitude toward their guests. She and Kevin met Mary and Garr at the state road. The two girls embraced rapturously; there was no sign in their greeting of the little restraint that had grown up between them in the spring. At once Janny began to tell Mary of the things they planned to do.

Before Garr she was a little shy. He looked older, less the schoolboy he had been. He called Janny "kid" and told her she had grown almost beyond recognition in the country air.

If Mary, with her sharp discernment, noticed a

studied graciousness in Carol's reception, she said nothing. Perhaps she had not expected more. And as the days went by and Janny had to explain, again and again, as they started off on some fun-making without Carol, "Carol does not like to do it," she made no comment. Perhaps she did not expect Carol would like to do the things they did.

Mary and Janny lay in the little room under the gable until far into the night, whispering. One would have thought they had not seen each other for years, so much was there to tell. "Are you asleep, Jan?" Mary would whisper, raising up on her elbow to peep at Janny in the other bed. Then she would tell some exciting little happening, about herself, or Garr, or some one who had come into the shop, or about some of the girls at school. And then Janny would begin: "Listen to this, Mary," and would recount some funny incident in making over the farm.

Mary loved the little room, just as Janny was sure she would. And she had loved the bare rambling rooms downstairs, with their uncertain floors and the little step from the hall into the living room, over which Kevin invariably tripped. "I didn't know you could make old things look so nice," she had said thoughtfully.

The days of the visit would not be long enough for the young people. Janny counted them—only thirteen and a half. Laughing, Kevin figured that he and Garr would just about get the posts in and wired for the grape-vines in that time.

The evenings were not long enough, either. Garr

had brought his banjo with him, and the young people sat out of doors each evening after supper, singing. Carol sat with them, but she said little and she did not sing, until one evening Garr turned to her and demanded that she choose a song. To Janny's delight she did so and sang herself, only softly, but her voice blended sweetly with Garr's deep notes and Kevin's uncertain tenor. They sang school songs and college songs and jazz songs and, at Miss Amy's request, " Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes " and " Annie Laurie."

Janny thought she liked best of all the evenings out under the apple tree. It was such fun sitting there in the dark, close enough to see one another's faces, talking, singing, to have Celia come out with a big pitcher of lemonade and a plate of cookies, to hear Kevin laugh. She liked to listen to the boys' talk. Charlie was very friendly toward Garr. They compared their respective "jobs." Garr was working in a lumber-yard. " It isn't much—just shifting lumber, but it's a start," he explained. " Next spring they'll send me down to Kentucky, where they own a lot of timberland—and sometime maybe I'll be president!" He laughed when he said that, but Janny caught a note of earnestness in his voice that made her believe he would be president of something, some day. Garr had given up his scholarship in Westhampton. He did not say much about that. " Oh, I had to get to work, on account of Mother, you see. Next winter I'm going to take one of those correspondence courses in salesmanship." Charlie wasn't so certain he'd ever be president of the bank where he

worked, for he admitted that he was awfully "dumb," but he professed to a great "kick" when he got his little pay envelope. And he told Garr it was a "darn shame" that he'd had to give up college. Janny, remembering what Charlie had said once about Westhampton, wanted to reach out now and squeeze his hand.

Even Mary, under cover of the darkness, admitted to her ambition to be an actress. "I'll always think—all the years I'm nursing you sick people—that a great tragedian is lost to the world," she groaned extravagantly. They all laughed, of course, but Janny saw Mary's chin go out in the stubborn way she knew so well.

They discussed with comic sophistication the foolishness of holding dreams. "They're silly," Mary declared loftily. "They don't get you anywhere," Kevin offered a little grimly, thinking perhaps of his beloved marionettes. "They make it harder when you have to give them up," Garr said slowly.

"Oh! But they're *nice*," defended Janny so ardently that the others looked at her. She had sprung to her feet; her slim straight body was silhouetted against the lamplight from the window. Unconsciously she spread out her arms. "I *always* want to have them. They are—like wings." Then, blushing furiously, expecting their laughter, she dropped down beside Mary.

But they did not laugh. No one said anything at once. Garr spoke finally. "You're a funny kid, Jan." But he said it without ridicule, gently, with a little wistfulness, just as he had spoken that night at the

concert, as if he envied Janny something she had which he didn't.

And Janny heard Carol check a barely audible sigh.

Only one day remained of the precious thirteen and a half. "Let's drive over to Keuka for a moonlight swim," suggested Kevin.

They all agreed to that. It was a fitting climax to the fun of the fortnight.

"Let's take chicken and stuffed eggs and lettuce sandwiches," suggested Charlie. "I'll try to catch the four-o'clock bus out."

"Won't you go, Carol?" asked Garr, turning directly to her.

Janny held her breath. She fancied Carol colored a little. Perhaps it was in vexation. But she answered promptly and excitedly:

"Why—yes. I'd like to go."

Janny wanted to exclaim in delight but she wisely held her tongue. Garr and Charlie struck up a song; no one showed any surprise that Carol at last deigned to go with them.

CHAPTER XXV

"*I* KNEW"

"JANNY, will you promise not to tell the others that I can't swim?" Carol whispered to Janny the next day as they were wrapping sandwiches in oiled paper for the picnic.

Janny looked up in surprise. She had thought Carol could swim, of course. But she assented willingly. She was so glad Carol was going that she would have agreed to anything. And Carol was acting as if she *wanted* to go. It had been Carol who, after breakfast, had watched with anxiety a few threatening clouds, who had warned Charlie to get the early bus, who had made most of the sandwiches and stuffed the eggs.

She appeared ready in a canary-colored linen dress, looking so pretty in it that Mary involuntarily exclaimed. "Funny, that with your hair you look so nice in that color," Mary said bluntly, but with such honest admiration that Carol's cheeks grew rosy. All at once Janny remembered how lovely Carol had looked in the yellow dress she had worn on the night of the awful party, but now she looked like a yellow rose and not at all like a poor butterfly. Janny, having forgotten to iron a freshly washed dress, looked a little rumpled and grew acutely conscious of it beside Carol's daintiness.

Carol expanded under Mary's praise and was really

gay. She rode with Garr and Charlie in the front seat of the car, while the others crowded into the back, their feet perched high on the baskets and towels and bathing suits. They sped uphill and down, laughing, chattering, sometimes singing.

Carol was bareheaded. The wind whipped little curly ends of hair against the black ribbon she had tied around her head, and in the sun these looked like spun threads of gold. Janny, looking at Carol's hair, suddenly wondered if Garr had noticed how pretty it was, how pretty Carol was and how gay. A disturbing wave of envy held her silent. Well, anyway, Garr should see that she could swim even if her hair was plain and dark and no one ever said anything more about her than: "You're a funny kid."

They spread their supper on a narrow strip of beach, "no man's land," Kevin called it, where they found a big flat rock for a table and two old logs conveniently near for seats. When the last sandwich and the last bit of chicken had been eaten they played games and the boys told hair-raising stories. Janny recognized some of the legends of Painted Post in Kevin's telling, but she only smiled at him and said nothing. The sun dropped behind the bank of trees, the lake turned to gold and pale silver and deepened to blue and black, the moon came up like a huge faded pumpkin, higher and higher, until it threw a band of dancing, moving mist-magic across the water to their very feet.

They watched the moon rise, their faces lifted to it.

"It never shines like that in the city," grumbled Mary—Mary, who had been so scornful of the country.

"It makes me want to quote poetry, only I never can remember any," Garr laughed.

"It makes me want to get into that water," declared Kevin, springing to his feet. "Come on—it's been hours since we ate."

The girls quickly donned their bathing suits in the shelter of a rough screen of branches which the boys had built for them. Now Janny was secretly exulting. Carol might be pretty and gay, with shining hair, but she couldn't swim—not as *she* could! She knew she could swim as well, better, perhaps, than the boys. Doctor John had taught her. With him she had breasted the current of the Shingle River many a time when it was running swiftly after heavy rains. They should all see how well she could swim, Carol and Mary and the boys.

They dipped into the cool water with loud squealing. At first they played in the shallower depth, splashing one another, shouting, laughing, but after a while, Kevin struck out into the black, Charlie after him. Garr turned to the girls. "Come on, let's see who gets to the moon first!" And he looked at Carol as he challenged.

Again the horrid demon of envy possessed Janny. With wicked delight she anticipated Carol's ignominy. *Now* Garr would find she could not swim! But the next instant she was calling out to Carol: "Oh, *don't*! It gets deep——" For Carol had dived into the water

after Garr. Janny, watching, immobile with apprehension, saw her arms flash white in the uncertain light as she managed a few awkward but successful strokes.

There came then one wavering, frightened cry, then there was nothing but the silent, moving water, black and silver-tipped where the moonlight caught it.

With one loud call of alarm, Janny plunged out to the spot where Carol had disappeared. Again and again she dived, came to the surface to look vainly over the eerie water for a sign of Carol. Her warning brought Garr and Charlie and Kevin back, but they did not comprehend what had happened until they saw her come up to the surface, clutching poor Carol by her streaming hair.

"Take her," Janny had only breath enough to gasp, and Garr reached out and caught Carol.

The others stood about in a little awe-struck circle as Garr put Carol down upon the sand. She was conscious, but choking horribly over the water she had swallowed, trembling pitifully. Her soaking hair streamed down over her shoulders. She clung to Garr as if she could not let go of him.

"Quick, give me a coat! She's more frightened than anything else," Garr said. His face was very stern. And when, the choking subsiding, Carol was leaning limply against his knee, he glared at the others.

"Why didn't some one say she couldn't swim?" His eyes accused them all.

"I thought she could," Charlie answered in a broken voice. "She always *said* she could——"

"*I* knew," confessed Janny in a smitten tone. She did not dare lift her eyes as she said it. And she did not explain that Carol had asked her to keep it a secret.

"Well, we'd better get home as fast as we can. Here, Mary, you and Jan help Carol to get dressed." He leaned over Carol. "Feel better? Can you walk a little—or will you let me carry you?"

When Carol said she guessed she could walk, he lifted her gently to her feet and supported her uncertain steps to the shelter, Janny and Mary walking behind them.

They rode home in absolute silence. Each was thinking how near the little picnic had come to be a tragedy. Carol wore Garr's coat, for she was still shivering; now and then a sob racked her. In the back seat Janny indulged in quiet tears. If anything had happened to Carol, if she hadn't found her in that dark water, it would have been her fault—— And what a home-coming for Uncle Nicholas. *That,* on top of everything else.

It gave her only a scant amount of comfort when, after Miss Amy and Celia had put Carol to bed with hot-water bottles and under warm blankets, Garr told Janny she'd really been the one who had saved Carol; she could not take even this credit to herself until she was certain Carol suffered no harm from her fright. Weren't people sometimes very ill from shock?

There was another burden on her soul. She could not forget that hateful envy she had felt for Carol, poor Carol. Janny had not known real envy before, and though it had passed, it left a sting, part shame, part

alarm. She must never, never, envy any one again, she thought solemnly, childishly—retribution came too swiftly!

The next morning Miss Amy reported her patient as well as ever. However, Carol refused to go downstairs. Mary and Garr departed without saying good-by to her. Janny saw Garr look up toward the window of Carol's room as he waved from the automobile. Looking up herself, she saw the outline of a shoulder beyond the window frame and she wondered if Garr had seen it, too.

Carol appeared at dinner, a little wan and very quiet. She refused to talk about the incident at the lake or to express regret that she had not said good-by to Mary and Garr. After dinner she went into the living room and sat down in the window with a book, but Janny, peeping anxiously in at her, knew she was not reading. The book lay unopened on her lap and she was staring out of the window with a little frown puckering her forehead. This quiet of Carol's was not like the sulky moodiness in which she had indulged often since coming to the farm. Janny knew instinctively it was different. For a moment Janny was moved to run to her as she would run to Mary, to beg her to unburden her heart to her, to break down the wall Carol had kept between them, but she hesitated and the impulse faltered. She tiptoed away from the door.

But they had so much to do to get everything ready for Uncle Nicholas' home-coming that Janny soon forgot Carol's brooding. Celia baked, Janny swept and

dusted, Kevin cut the grass in front of the house. Janny picked some of her precious nasturtiums and put them in a bowl on the living-room table, patting the glossy leaves as she arranged them. They were her offering to Uncle Nicholas.

When she heard the honk of the letter carrier's horn she ran out to the box with a desperate hope that the long-looked-for letter might come to-day, now, just before Uncle Nicholas' return. Oh, what a welcome she would have for him, then. But there were only two letters in the box and they were for Carol. She turned them over and over in her disappointment.

But a letter *must* come soon, she thought, going slowly back into the house.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SLATE WASHED CLEAN

"DAD, will you come out and look at my grape-vines?" asked Kevin, one day, a week after Nicholas Bartley had come home.

Janny watched Kevin and his father go out together. Kevin was talking eagerly to his father, probably about his grapes. That was all Kevin thought about, now—his grapes. He had found the old vines almost overgrown with weeds and he had rescued them, cleared them, trained them on the new wires Garr had helped him string. Kevin wanted to set out more grapes sometime. Jamison's, on the hill, had five acres of them, and grapes brought a good price these days.

It was significant to Janny that Uncle Nicholas listened to Kevin. There were other things significant about Uncle Nicholas since his return. He did not frown now all the time. He talked with them when they gathered to eat Celia's good meals. He sat with them out on the grass under the apple tree. No longer did he shut a door between himself and his family.

Janny looked upon the flannel shirt he wore around the farm as significant of the new Uncle Nicholas. It looked odd on his lean, precise figure, as if it did not quite belong there, but Janny liked it.

She liked, too, the way he sometimes reached out and patted Aunt Maddy's hand. Aunt Maddy invariably blushed when he did so.

Nicholas Bartley had come back, very thin, very gray, very quiet. He had looked over the old farmhouse with an appreciation, almost humble, of the happy home they had achieved against great odds. He knew they had done it for him. But there had been no hint of sacrifice, not even on Carol's part, and Nicholas Bartley thanked them only with the words: "A man can't be quite a failure with such a family."

Janny did not think he was a failure. She never thought, "poor Uncle Nicholas" as she watched him these days.

No one talked of the coming winter. It was enough to live peacefully each long summer day. And Janny never dismissed from her mind the certainty that she must hear very soon, any day, from the Happyday Mine. She played with the thought—how she would give everything to Uncle Nicholas. Even Doctor John must think that all right, now, considering everything.

When Uncle Nicholas and Kevin were out of sight she turned back to the house. She had asked Celia if she might make little raised biscuits, and she must be about it. She put on an apron and got out a mixing bowl and her flour, added wood to the fire.

Carol and Aunt Maddy had driven into the city and Celia had gone to a neighboring farm for eggs. Janny had the kitchen to herself, so she sang as she moved about at her work.

When a knock sounded at the front door she stood stock-still, wondering. "Whoever can it be?" she said

aloud. She rubbed the flour from her hands and went to the door.

A giant of a man stood on the threshold. He wore clothes of a startling cut and hang and of obvious newness. He had taken a broad-brimmed felt hat from his head and was carefully dusting it with a big red-bordered handkerchief. As he did so a diamond ring on his finger caught the sun and flashed tiny sparks of fire. His big feet, in shining yellowish-tan shoes, were planted a little astraddle on the doorsill.

Janny, halting in the shadow of the hallway, felt an inclination to retreat. But the stranger, seeing her, began a polite, "How'd 'do, miss," then stopped short and stared. "You ain't little Janny, are you?" he asked in a deep, husky voice.

The voice roused instant recognition. Janny cried, "Joe," a little faintly. She went forward slowly, torn by a longing to throw herself into his arms as she had done many and many a time, held back by the consciousness of the years that had passed since she saw him.

The voice was the same, but not at once could she believe this was Joe—in these strange clothes, barbaric in their flaming stylishness. She led him into the living room and he sat down in Uncle Nicholas' chair, a little forward on its edge, as if he would not trust his weight to it. He held his amazing hat in his hands and rubbed his big hand over and around the bright hatband. And poor Janny could not take her eyes from the great flashing diamond.

" I've been in Alaska—since I quit partnership with your pa," Joe explained, almost sheepishly. " But I got sorter homesick, so I came back and went up Shingle River. I hit Painted Post the day after the schoolmaster set up the trail and I followed him."

" Oh! " Now Janny sat straight, her heart hammering. " Did——"

But at that moment Nicholas Bartley came into the room. Janny introduced Joe Primrose to her uncle. Remembering her uncle's scorn for these adventurers of the North, she felt a little frightened. She prayed that Uncle Nicholas would not notice the diamond.

A little stiffly, Nicholas Bartley shook hands with the stranger, bade him sit down again, took his hat. Without his hat to occupy his big hands poor Joe Primrose was more ill at ease than before. Uncle Nicholas spoke of the warm day and Joe agreed that it was powerful warm. Uncle Nicholas inquired as to his journey and Joe answered briefly.

Poor Janny listened to the two men, uncomfortable for Joe, fearful that Uncle Nicholas' formality might offend him. When conversation threatened to lapse she suffered as much as Joe, yet was too timid to put in a word herself.

Presently Uncle Nicholas broke an awkward silence. " I believe you were a close friend of my brother's."

At that Joe straightened so quickly that the chair creaked under him. He was not shy, now. " I was that," he answered promptly. " Roger Bartley and me were as good pals as I guess men ever can be. I loved

that boy." He said it in the deep slow voice Janny remembered, the voice that had told her stories, crooned to her, snuggling, sleepily, against his arm. This was the old Joe! She forgot the strange clothes, even the diamond.

But now Joe's face grew troubled. "I guess folks thought *I* left Rog sort o' cold. Mebbe he thought it that way himself. I didn't explain why I cleared out. Wasn't ever any good tryin' to explain anything to him —he'd always have his way and I was like a baby when he set his mind to anything. But I figgered I was a hoodoo to the partnership. We never had much of what you could call luck. I got the notion that if I went away he'd make a strike, or mebbe get married again, or mebbe come East home, like he sometimes talked of doin', count of the little one. So I just went off without leavin' any explainin' behind me. I went to Alaska. That's pretty far off, y'know, least where I went. But I missed Roger. I never had any other pal. And I missed the little one, here——"

He paused, evidently to control some mounting emotion. Nicholas Bartley said nothing to interrupt his story. Janny waited impatiently. Oh, why didn't he tell of the Happyday Mine? But he must speak of it very soon.

". . . I heard when I got to Painted Post that Roger'd died and left the kid, that the schoolmaster's folks'd taken her, and when I hunted them up they told me she'd come on here and that the schoolmaster'd gone up North with that old map I'd given Roger and he'd

given the kid and she'd sent to the schoolmaster——"

He paused again, this time to mop his forehead with the same handkerchief that had done service for his hat.

Now Nicholas Bartley's interest plainly was roused. He looked quickly at Janny.

"So you did have that old map?" Though he did not say it rebukingly, Janny's face turned crimson.

"Yes," she admitted. "I had it. I—meant to give it to you—that night of the party—but you wouldn't—So I sent it to Doctor John."

Joe Primrose did not notice her confusion, or Nicholas Bartley's sudden display of interest. He went on as if they had not spoken. His eyes were on his big hands, which were locked between his knees.

". . . so I follered him up there."

Janny could not wait longer. "Did he find the mine?" she cried.

Joe looked up. "Sure he found it—plain as a nose on a man's face when a fellar had the little map. He had every prospector for two hundred miles 'round doggin' his heels. Don't need no radio to broadcast anything like *that!* But he got there, first, just him and the Indian guide he took along——"

"D—did he find—silver?"

"Yep, lots of it—looked like ribbons strung all pretty over the ground, just as my old dad told me it was. But that was all it was—pretty ribbons, like you'd tie round your waist for these here sashes, Janny."

Janny stood up quickly. "You mean——" Her

voice was shrill. "You mean—that that was *all* there was?"

Joe saw the great disappointment darkening her face. "That's all, little un. 'Twas one of those freak teasers, just a show on top o' the ground and nothin' else for the digging. Not worth the cost of grub."

"Oh-h." That was the only sound Janny made.

"Why, my dear child——" began Uncle Nicholas, looking at her amused. "When did you set your heart on this dream of wealth?"

When! Janny knew when but she couldn't tell him—how it had begun that night Miss Amy had hinted of the "end of the rope," taken definite shape when he was stricken, grown more real when in her sleep she had seen Doctor John coming. Nor could she tell him *why* she had clung to the dream. She had not known herself how much it meant until now it fell to pieces around her. She sat down in the chair, limply, averting her face. She could not bear it if they laughed at her!

"That was a pretty sick bunch o' men that follered Doctor John up there," Joe went on, keeping his eyes away from Janny. "Guess one and another of 'em had been lookin' for that there lost mine for the last twenty years. I felt kind o' sick myself about it. I'd given that map to Roger because it was all I had to give him I could call my own. My old dad had given it to me. Didn't know whether it was worth a shot, for my dad was queer sometimes count of a tree fallin' on him square on his head. But it was all I had and I owed it

to Roger for he'd saved my life. He'd saved it and almost died himself for the trouble. Fancy Roger dying for the likes of me! I know men, I've seen all kinds, your psalm-singin' kind, and rough men you wouldn't let into your parlor, and all told they average up about alike when you get 'em facing death square and lookin' it in the eye. But after that night Roger Bartley carried me on his back through the woods when we was lost and wouldn't leave me behind and save himself, I figgered *he* was head and shoulders above the average. He was the bravest man ever lived—my pal, Roger."

Here Joe stopped to wipe, without embarrassment, tears from his eyes—which he did with the colored handkerchief.

"Tell us about it," said Nicholas Bartley in a strained voice. His brow was furrowed in the old way.

"Ain't so much to tell. We'd gone outside for grub and we lost our way back. Worst blizzard I ever see come up and it got bitter cold. I slipped on an old log and busted my fool shin—couldn't go another step. I wanted Roger to go along without me. Alone, mebbe he'd get out some way, find some camp. But he wouldn't. Wouldn't see sense nohow. I reminded him of the kid. Remember just what he said to that. 'If I was coward enough to leave a pal I wouldn't be takin' much back to her.' That was Rog. He stuck by me. First he tried helpin' me to shuffle along but it wan't no use—I fainted on him. And then he got me over his shoulders and he got through somehow, though how,

God knows. We was both frostbitten and Rog was all in. But he'd stuck by me!"

Brief as Joe had made his halting story, it took vivid shape before the two listeners. Janny's eyes were shining. Her disappointment of the mine forgotten, she sat with her hands clasped in an attitude of adoration for that Roger Bartley who wouldn't leave a pal.

Joe cleared his throat. Evidently there was something more he wanted to say which he found a little difficult.

"Don't know much about Roger afore we took the trail together but I allas kind o' figgered he'd run away from home. Sometimes he'd talk about his folks and he'd talk sorry-like, act kind o' homesick for you. He kept askin' me if I didn't think mebbe he oughter bring the kid back where she could grow up a lady. Don't know, of course, what he did to make him run away and guess it ain't any of my affairs but——" Joe lifted his eyes pleadingly to Nicholas Bartley's face. An embarrassed flush mounted over his swarthy cheeks. "Don't you think that little business of savin' my life washed his slate pretty clean?"

Slowly Nicholas Bartley held out his hand to the other man. His face was drawn with emotion, his voice heavy with it when he answered.

"You make me ashamed. There is nothing—as I see life now—to wipe from my brother's slate. If I had given him the understanding you gave him, he might never have gone away."

Joe took the outstretched hand in a mighty grip.

He sat back, then, satisfied that he had said what he wanted to say, and regarded Janny, chuckling.

"So you was all set on bein' rich, was you? That'd tickled your daddy. Guess mebbe that was what was in the schoolmaster's head when he said, 'You go, Joe, and tell the child. She'll be so happy findin' you she won't mind the other.' Say, that schoolmaster man's smart as blazes—nobody fools him even if he is a schoolmaster. I'm goin' to know him better. I sort o' figger he's got the right idea of things back in his head. They're openin' a new copper field up the river and Painted Post's likely to go on the map in big letters. There's talk of runnin' a branch of the railroad up there. Mebbe your Doctor John, as you call him, will be mayor some day——"

Janny suspected Joe was trying to divert her thoughts from the mine. But he need not try. Already her disappointment had vanished. She had found treasure beyond reckoning! Happyday, the Lost Mine, must stand as a symbol of her father's bravery, for her and for his people, these kin of his who had barred even his name from their midst. What was mere silver compared to that? She wondered if her uncle would reckon as she did—he must.

When Uncle Nicholas begged Joe to remain with them, a guest at the farm, Janny added her entreaty. Though she was still a little shy before this new Joe, her heart was warming more and more to awakening memories.

They took Joe out over the little farm, and walking

alongside of him, she unconsciously slipped her hand into his, in the old way.

He looked down at her from his great height. "Well, Joe was thinkin' you was kind of stand-offish, seein' how you used to be my kid most as much as your daddy's——"

Janny felt a little apprehension as to how Aunt Maddy would accept Joe. Maybe Carol and Charlie would laugh at the huge diamond ring. Maybe no one of the old-fashioned beds would be long enough for Joe. But, remembering how Joe had washed clean her father's slate—she thought of it as Joe had put it—she rebuked herself for such worrying, for even caring if Aunt Maddy were cold or Carol laughed.

If Joe's appearance gave Aunt Maddy a shock when she met him, and it must have done so, she hid it under her polite manner. If Nicholas Bartley had asked him to stay, he must stay with them, of course. At supper, while they were all gathered together, Nicholas Bartley repeated the story Joe had told him and Janny, and Janny knew he told it that the others might know how brave her father had been. It gave Joe a place among them. He might call Aunt Maddy "ma'am," and Carol "miss," he might fumble with his fork and spoons and mop his forehead with a red-bordered handkerchief, wear diamonds on every finger and thumb, but he was Joe, her father's pal, whom her father had risked his life to save. He belonged with them.

Joe himself solved the problem of the bed. "Give me a shakedown and let me sleep under that there

apple tree. I ain't used to layin' under roofs and I'll dream a sight easier with the stars winkin' at me." He insisted over their hesitation.

After a few days it seemed to Janny as if Joe always had been there. A great contentment enwrapped her—to show Joe her favorite haunts, the new little calf at Jamison's, the fir trees on the hill, to sit and listen to him while he talked of her father, her mother, too——

"It bothered your daddy—he was always sayin', 'Joe, I don't think I'm doin' for the kid what *she'd* want me to do.' Your mother was all for books and learnin', I guess. She was teachin' school, you know, up in a little place near Seattle when your daddy met her. And your daddy wanted you to be like her. That's why he talked of takin' you back East. 'The kid ought to go to a reg'lar school and not be knockin' round with a couple roughnecks like me and you.' Of course he said it his way but that's what it amounted to. We used to sit over the campfire, him and me, until 'most mornin' talkin' about your ma and you. I guess she was an angel even before she went to heaven. He said she was."

Janny liked to watch Joe with Kevin. Joe was more at ease with Kevin than with Charlie or Uncle Nicholas. "The boy makes me sort o' think of Roger," he said of Kevin to Uncle Nicholas, and Janny saw a strange expression pass over her uncle's face.

With Joe she felt secure, as she had felt when she was a child, trudging by his side over some trail. She had known then that at the hard places Joe would lift

her to his shoulder; she had known that when she was tired he would laugh or tell her a story or sing.

She refused to think of Joe's going away. He must not go. Just how he could fit into the life in the East, she could not imagine, but he must not go. So when, one evening after he had been at the farm a week, Joe spoke of "hittin' the trail," she turned on him, startled, hurt, unbelieving. "Oh, Joe, you *can't* go."

"But I gotta get out o' these riggin's 'fore I bust out. Didn't figger I could stay sewed up in 'em long as I have!" He laughed his booming laugh, but he did not look at Janny.

"But you can't go, Joe," she pleaded, tears in her voice. And when Joe did not answer, she went on, desperately: "If you go, I'm going with you, the way we used to when Daddy was with us——"

He tightened his fingers around the small hand in his, but he shook his head. "Wish it could be that a-way, kitten. Say, you're happy, here, ain't you?" he demanded suddenly.

"Yes—yes. I am—now." Janny could not be anything but honest. "But they don't need me. I'm just an unnecessary expense. And Uncle Nicholas is poor, now." She brightened a little. That was a strong argument in her plea.

But Joe ignored it. "Then it's just the way your daddy would o' wanted it. You here with his folks goin' to a nice school and gettin' learnin' out of books. And you're not to worry your little head about expense. You're Joe's little gal, same's you used to be. And I

made a pile up in Alaska and it's yours, much as mine, like we were pals. I told your uncle last night that you was to pick out the fanciest school you wanted and go as long as it pleased you. And if there's anything you want outside o' schools and things, just write Joe. And if you get too all-powerful hungry for a sight of my old map, you say the word and I'll put on these riggin's and come East for a visit, same as this. Now, ain't that all a-right?"

Janny walked on in silence. Tears were streaming down her face, but behind them was a slow brightening.

"Will you go back to Painted Post, Joe?"

"That I will. Do a little prospectin' to keep my hand in, but I'll stay in Painted Post. I' got a notion to build a house there where the old cabin was—the one your daddy and you and me lived in for a little while. And I figger mebbe I can help elect your schoolmaster mayor when the electin's ripe——"

"Joe." Janny paused in the road, staring ahead as if she saw something in vision there. "Joe. I'll stay here. I'll go to school and learn enough to teach. And then I'm going back to Painted Post and teach in Doctor John's place so that he can be mayor. Joe—do you think Daddy would like it that way?"

CHAPTER XXVII

"RIM OF THE WORLD"

With September came the question of returning to the city. School would open soon for Kevin and Carol and Janny. Charlie had dismissed all thought of college with a peremptory: "Nothing doing *now*. I'm learning a lot right there in the bank. So far I've learned that I don't know as much as I thought I did, and I guess that's something."

Nicholas Bartley was going in to his office three days of each week. Janny had heard him say something to Aunt Maddy about "gathering up the pieces," which must mean that he had found pieces to gather. And he had said it very cheerfully.

One evening as they sat around the fireplace, in which, with much ceremony, a wood fire had been kindled, Aunt Maddy put to the family the question of staying out through October.

"I wonder if I'll sleep nine hours every night in the city," mused Nicholas Bartley.

"I shall miss Jamison's rooster to waken me every morning," laughed Aunt Maddy.

"I can't go in until I've harvested my grape crop," declared Kevin importantly, at which the others laughed merrily, for Kevin's grapes could be counted by the bunch. At their mirth he squared his shoulders defiantly. "Oh, you can laugh now, but you'll see. Dad's

said I can set out two acres more of them. The rest of you can go in, but I'll camp here, week-ends, anyway."

"Theodore Mann told me yesterday that our tenants would like to keep the house all winter," remarked Nicholas Bartley, casually.

No one said anything to that at once. Then Carol spoke in a voice she tried to keep even. "Why don't we let them? I'd like to stay here all winter——"

"*You* would!" snorted Charlie. The others looked at Carol astonished, uncertain of the meaning behind her suggestion.

Carol flushed. She knew they doubted her sincerity. "I mean it. I like this old house—now. And I—I'd like to see if I could do it." She looked at her mother, begging for understanding. "I'd like to know that I don't have to have everything soft and easy. I'd like to walk through deep snow and wash in cold water and go to bed early and get up early—so as to know that I *could* do it. That's what I want if—if—it wouldn't be too hard on the rest of you——"

So there were other miracles working. Janny stared at Carol, fascinated. When had this change begun? Carol was frowning; in her eyes was the brooding Janny had seen on that day after the unhappy incident at Keuka Lake.

"You'd walk through the snow all right, Sis. And you'd break ice before you could wash your face. And you'd go to bed early enough because there wouldn't be anything else to do," Charlie warned her. But Carol ignored him.

"We could put in an engine and running water," suggested Kevin eagerly. "We could even rig up an electric-light plant like Jamisons have. With the rent from the other house we could do a lot and be ahead, Dad."

"The bus runs all winter," put in Miss Amy.

"We'd be here early to start the garden," said Aunt Maddy. "I'd like to put in some bulbs——"

"And I'll build the pump house," added Kevin.

"And you can make your marionettes," whispered Janny to him. She sat beside him in the little circle.

He shook his head at her. "I've got a lot to do before I go back to them," he muttered. She thought he meant his grapes until he leaned close to her and hissed: "Cicero."

"We might all put ourselves to such a test as Carol suggests—and profit by it," said Nicholas Bartley slowly.

Without more words it seemed to be decided. The family, sharing Carol's heroics, were breathless at their daring. "We'll be like the pioneers," said Miss Amy excitedly.

Janny looked over the little circle grouped before the fire. What fun it was to sit like this, together, to talk over things. And she belonged! She had won her place, as Doctor John had wanted her to, and it was made forever secure by that of which the little map was a symbol. She had heard the family talking over Roger Bartley's simple deed of bravery. They had made Joe tell of it in greater detail, and she knew they were proud

of her father, where once they had shunned all thought of him.

With deep satisfaction Janny felt that that something she always had missed in the big house on Maple Avenue was here with them now as they sat and talked. She could not define it as mutual interest and affection, a unity of purpose, she knew it only as something that made their voices softer, their eyes more kindly. She looked at Kevin. His face was alight with eagerness, probably already he was planning the pump house. And he was going to tackle the despised Cicero again. He'd make it this time. She knew that by the set of his shoulders. She looked on to Charlie. Charlie was taller, thinner. He seldom bantered or teased now, or laughed at things in his old gay way, but she liked him better. She looked at Aunt Maddy, but she had almost forgotten what the old Aunt Maddy was like, so accustomed was she now to this new Aunt Maddy with the backbone. Not so accustomed was she to the important Miss Amy. Not even at home did Miss Amy put aside her rôle of saleslady for the Élite Millinery S-h-o-p-p-e. As she sat now in her chair, alert, trim, in her plain dark dress, her lips were puckering as if she were about to say: "What can I show you, madam?" She never tired of comparing the Élite with Sarah Eames's shop, and though she, maybe, missed the little back room at Sarah Eames's and the cup of tea and the gossip, hats were hats and women were women, and she got the same satisfaction decking out the headgear of the ladies of Newton as she had for her old friends in the town of

her girlhood. And Miss Amy wore her independence like a crown. Janny had heard the brief conflict between her and Aunt Maddy, in which Cousin Amy had triumphed, leaving her "board" money on the table as sign of her victory. Looking on to Uncle Nicholas, Janny caught him musing, his eyes fastened on the leaping fire, but now there was no frown furrowing his brow, the tired look had gone from his face.

Last she looked at Carol—pretty Carol, who had begged to test her courage.

Carol had changed, too, in the months that had passed since the night of the party. Now Janny realized with a little shock how much she had changed. The doll-like prettiness was gone from her face. Where the little dimple had played about her lips was a line of seriousness that made Janny think of Mary, the Mary who was going to be a nurse. Her blue eyes no longer widened merrily, as they had had a way of doing, with a quick upsweep of thick lashes; now they were almost always deep with introspection. Carol no longer sulked or wept into her pillow at night or said unkind things to hurt anybody. And she had said she liked the old house! And it was Carol who wanted to stay out all winter. Oh, she *had* changed.

Looking at Carol, Janny sighed. If only this changed Carol would be friends with her, real friends, as she and Mary were friends. But Janny still felt that little barrier between them, as if Carol's interests must always be apart from hers.

Before going, Joe had given Janny some money.

"Here's something for pretties. All girls like to have 'em, don't they?" he had said when he thrust a roll of bills into her hands. It had seemed like a great deal of money, more than she ever could spend on herself, so at once she had planned how she would buy things with it for Mrs. Carruthers and the little girls and for Mother Faire and Doctor John and even Aunt Maddy, when she knew what Aunt Maddy would like. And she'd thought how she'd buy things for Carol, too. But now, sitting in the dreaminess of the firelight, she longed to give Carol more than just gifts, bought with money.

A sudden sharp frost had turned the birch trees on the hillsides into scarlet flame. Great red apples hung on the tree at the door. The hawthorn was yellowing and the hedges along the road were gorgeous with goldenrod and asters. The out-of-doors beckoned with a luring finger. Janny roved over the hillsides like a gypsy, coming in laden with trailing vines of wild clematis and scarlet branches, or stalks of milkweed pods scattering a little drift of silver, or handfuls of wintergreen berries, her eyes reflecting the glory of the summer's last flame of flowering.

"Where are you going, Jan?" asked Carol one afternoon when Janny started out of the door.

Janny had difficulty controlling her surprise. Carol never had asked her that before! "Oh, just out. I thought maybe I'd walk up to the fir trees." She colored a little consciously.

"Can I go with you? I've never been up there."

Of course it was silly to be so excited because Carol wanted to go with her! Probably Carol was bored staying at the farm. She tried desperately to act as if it were nothing unusual. They started away together. As they walked Janny kept up a rapid chatter. She pointed out to Carol the things she loved. "Oh, Carol, look at that tree. It *hadn't* turned yesterday, I know." Or, when they passed Kevin's grapes: "Aren't they beautiful? Aren't they getting the loveliest purple?" At every turn she found new glories for Carol's eyes to see. Indeed, Carol might only have found her vision after a blindness as black as Sarah Eames's cousin's, for the joy with which Janny was begging her to look at this and that.

Carol, on her part, tried to express appreciation for what made Janny so simply happy, but she did it in an uncertain way, half-hearted, a little embarrassed. And when finally they reached the hilltop and stood under the marching firs, she looked relieved that Janny subsided into a rapt silence.

Below them lay another valley of woodlands and yellowing meadows, farms, roads like out-flung ribbons. The sun was setting. The sky had turned to the colors of the inside of a shell, pink and pale blue and faint mauve.

Janny stood braced against one of the straight trees, her eyes fixed on the distant horizon. They were misty with dreaming. Carol looked from her to the far sky and back again. And then she sighed, audibly. The little sound brought Janny's attention sharply to her.

"Janny—I wish I could see things—the way you see them!"

"Whatever do you mean, Carol?"

"Why, see *beyond*. I mean, see something more than just the little things around one. I don't know how you do it. I wish you could—teach me. Why, now, when *I* look at that sunset I just see a lot of color—I don't see what *you* do—what makes you look like you do in your eyes——"

Janny could not answer that. For one thing she was moved by amazement that Carol should be speaking to her like this—her. For another, she scarcely could shape into words the dreaming that held her—five years more, for of course she must go to college, five years of walls and city streets and strange faces and ununderstanding people and then Painted Post! Wasn't that what she saw beyond that distant rim? But she could not tell Carol that.

However, she sat down next to Carol and slipped her hand shyly through Carol's arm.

Carol went on haltingly, as if she were struggling with difficult lines she carefully had learned, yet now had forgotten.

"I've been horrid to you, Janny. Oh, I know enough to know *that*. I tried to be. I was annoyed because Dad brought you to our house. You did look as if you'd come out of the Ark—your clothes and things, you see, and you were such a simple thing. And then when I couldn't seem to hurt you I was more annoyed than ever. Since we came out here—I guess I've been

just jealous. You didn't seem to mind it, coming here. You liked it. And lately I've got to hating myself, Jan—because I was so horrid about everything and couldn't act any other way. I guess it was what happened over at Keuka opened my eyes. That was such a silly, conceited thing to do. I'd always pretended I could swim when really I was afraid to learn. And I've been like that about everything. Why, any girl who has had all that Dad and Mamma have given me ought to be perfect! And I'm not. I'm just a conceited, thankless, selfish pretend prig."

Janny could find a voice to deny that. Carol might have been all that once, but she wasn't now——

"You weren't any sillier than I was. I was so smug about knowing how to swim, that the boys would see that I could and you couldn't. I was *much* sillier than you," she protested vigorously.

"Janny, do—do you think—we might be friends?"

"I'd like to," Janny answered simply. But she drew in her breath excitedly.

Their pact—come though it had after endless rebuffs and longings on Janny's part and on Carol's, only after a struggle that must have been painful even to bitterness—was sealed with nothing more than silence.

But Carol had said: "I wish you could teach me——" Carol *needed* her! Janny tasted that with smiling lips.

Some day she would tell Carol what Miss Amy had said about "growing-pains." Of course they all must

have them. Mary had had them, when she found the pretty slippers that had been her mother's in a happier time. She herself had had them, many of them, in the winter past. "Profit of pain——" Words of the verses Doctor John had sent her flashed to her mind. Some day she would read those verses to Carol, let Carol share them with her——

Side by side they sat while the sun sank lower and the far rim of the world took on a glory of gold and crimson. Over their heads the wind whined through the firs.

Across the sky a flock of birds flew southward, their curving wings dipped with the sky's crimson. At sight of them Janny suddenly straightened, the old stir pulsing through her. "I wish I was a bird."

Carol turned puzzled, wistful eyes upon her.

"You really *are* a funny kid, Jan."

THE END

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